

THE TRUTH
OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION
AS ESTABLISHED BY THE
MIRACLES OF CHRIST.

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LONDON
THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY,
56, LATE NOSTER FOW, 65, ST PAUL'S CHURCHYARD, AND
164, PICCADILLY

LO CO\ R. K. BURT, AND CO, PRINTERS, WINE OFFICE COURT

PREFACE.

THE author of the following lectures is a convert of the Free Church of Scotland Institution in Calcutta, founded by Dr Duff. He was baptized when he was fifteen years old. For ten years he was head-master of the central school of the London Missionary Society in Benares, where his knowledge of Christian truth and his spiritual life were greatly deepened through the assiduous care and training of the Rev J and Mrs Kennedy. For a further period of ten years he was in the employment of the Government. Since then he has been in connection with the mission of the American Methodist Episcopal Church. For the last five or six years he has been engaged in the work of lecturing to educated natives of the great cities of Northern India on the claims of Christ and the Gospel. How well fitted he is for this work is fully proved by the lectures contained in this volume. Missionaries of all societies have co-operated with him and shown their appreciation of his work. Several of his lectures have been issued in pamphlet form and widely circulated by the Publication Board of the American Church with which he is now connected. It is thought that their usefulness might be perpetuated and extended by re-issue in a volume.

The importance of the topics treated, the ability and fulness of knowledge displayed in the discussion of them, and the need that exists for works of this kind, will be fully recognised by all intelligent Christians who discern the signs of the times and are alive to the most pressing wants of the day. Not only in India but in England are such works required, and these lectures are adapted for English as well as Hindu readers. It is indeed a token for good touching the future of India that able champions of the Christian faith like the Baboo Ram Chandra Bose are being raised up to propagate and defend it, to meet and grapple with the scepticism and infidelity which education without the Bible, followed by the reading of the books of European and American speculative unbelievers—scientific and philosophical—is so fitted to produce. The work of the full evangelisation and Christianisation of India must ultimately devolve on native Christians. We may well look forward with heart and hope when we find the mission schools already yielding fruits like these. Dr Duff, from whose Institution the author of these lectures came forth, began his work with apologetic weapons. Some of his earliest converts were subdued and won by means of them. We see in these lectures how well they are wielded by one of the later converts and pupils of his Institution.

That God may bless and prosper him in his work and raise up many more like him, as well as use this present volume for His own glory and the conversion of unbelievers, will be the prayer of every Christian reader.

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THE TRUTH

OF THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

I

THE NATURE AND POSSIBILITY OF MIRACLES.

THERE are certain questions which can be settled, not so well by mere abstract or speculative reasoning, as by the stern, inexorable logic of facts. Take, for instance, the question—Is a Divine revelation possible? Is it possible for God to reveal Himself to our minds, to communicate to us, by means of visions and revelations, such knowledge as is essential to our well-being in life and happiness throughout eternity?

You are aware that some self-styled philosophers of the day have most peremptorily denied the possibility of such intercourse between the mind of God and that of man. It is certainly possible to bring forward several lines of abstract reasoning to silence these sceptics. Many sound and cogent arguments, drawn from our views of the power and benevolence of God, from the nature of things, and from analogy, may be adduced to prove the possibility of that species of intercourse between heaven and earth which is implied in a Divine revelation. But this is by no means the best way of solving the problem under consideration.

The easiest and the most satisfactory way of setting the question at rest is to prove, by a bold appeal to the stubborn facts of History, that God has, at different times and in various ways, revealed Himself to man to communicate knowledge, such as he could never possibly have acquired without such revelation. If some incontestable and undeniable facts, such as the monotheistic faith of Abraham, the unique history of the Jews, the prophetic utterances embodied in the Jewish Scriptures, and the sublime teaching of Christ and His Apostles—if such incontestable and undeniable facts are arrayed in favour of what may be called the fact of revelation, all arguments against the possibility of revelation necessarily fall to the ground.

Let us enlarge on one of these facts—the monotheism of Abraham—to make our meaning clear. It is an undeniable fact that the father of the faithful upheld, and to some extent propagated, a sublime type of Theism at a time when the whole world was sunk in idolatry and fetishism. His faith was a solitary oasis in an interminable wilderness of wrong belief and impure practice—was as far above that of his contemporaries all the world over as heaven is above the earth. The monotheistic belief of Abraham is a singular phenomenon which you are bound to explain, a historical problem you are bound to solve reasonably. Admit that Abraham received his supernatural knowledge directly from God, and the phenomenon becomes explicable. Deny the fact of revelation, and the phenomenon becomes an enigma. Whether you admit or deny the fact of revelation, remember that no amount of reasoning, based on the laws of development, can bring down the sublime faith of the great progenitor of the Jewish race from the lofty platform of the supernatural to the low level of the natural!

All this may be predicated of the great problem with which we have to do, the problem which stands out in bold relief from the infidel writings of the day. The

question, stated with logical precision and brevity, is—Are miracles possible? That they are possible is a corollary deducible from our instinctive ideas of God and His attributes, from the nature of things and from analogy. Mere abstract reasoning too goes far to settle the point in dispute. But mere abstract reasoning must in this and similar matters acknowledge its inferiority to the irresistible logic of facts. The very best way of setting the question at rest, once and for ever, is to prove, by a bold appeal to the undeniable facts of History, that miracles have been wrought. If what may be called the fact of miracles is substantiated by an array of historical evidence, such as no reasonable man can gainsay, their possibility is proved to a demonstration, and the controversy hanging on it necessarily receives its death-blow. And therefore the best thing which Christian apologists can do, when called upon to face the anti-miraculous theories of this or any bygone age, is not to waste a minute on mere abstract or speculative reasoning, but to present directly the incontestable historical evidence which can be adduced in favour of the stupendous miracles wrought by Christ and His Apostles. In this way they oppose facts to theories, and neutralise thin webs of speculative reasoning by the argument which is the most invulnerable and conclusive of all.

But a great deal is made in this, as in other lands, of what is called the antecedent improbability of miracles, and it is worth while to show their possibility on purely speculative grounds. Some of our countrymen, led on by the great infidel writers of the day, have come to the conclusion that the *a priori* objections to the possibility of miracles are unanswerable, and they are raising shouts of victory in honour of the science which is emancipating the world from the thralldom of beliefs incident to a "theological age." They loudly and triumphantly proclaim that the millennium of science has come, that the iron steadfastness and immu-

tability of the laws of nature are being recognised every where on the surface of the globe, and that, consequently, it is impossible at this late hour of the day to uphold, even amongst ignorant people, a general belief in the supernatural. And as to intelligent men and women, who have to some extent looked into the mysteries of science, their attitude of positive disbelief all the sacred traditions of the world put together cannot possibly shake !

I hope to be able to show that these felicitations are somewhat premature, and that candid men may be brought to a rational faith in the supernatural even by speculative reasoning. I, of course, do not pretend to originality either of thought or of expression. The arguments brought forward by our opponents are old and threadbare, and the replies by which I propose to neutralise them are also old and threadbare. We need not, however, bemoan our want of originality, as both our opponents and ourselves are on the same platform—the platform of respectable and contented mediocrity.

Our educated countrymen, who loudly and peremptorily deny the possibility of miracles, do not perhaps know what their negation means. If they clearly saw where their anti-miraculous theories would lead them, they might shrink from the awful responsibility of giving them publicity. They see clearly enough the proximate or immediate consequence of their positive denial of miracles, but I am almost sure that they do not foresee its ultimate or remote consequence.

The denial of miracles means, in the first place, the destruction of Christianity, and this significance of their attitude they are wise enough to see and grasp. But this denial, in the second place, means the extinction of all religion whatever, but this result they do not foresee, a fact attested by the tone of levity in which they parade their opposition to miracles.

1 We have no hesitation in admitting that their negation

of miracles, if established or proved well-grounded, would thoroughly annihilate Christianity. Christianity is neither a bundle of theories nor a tissue of dogmas, *it is a string of facts, all of which are more or less miraculous*. Christianity is concentrated in Christ, and He is justly called the wonder of wonders, the miracle of miracles! Everything connected with His life, from His birth in the womb of the Virgin Mary to His ascension from Mount Olivet, is a miracle. His immaculate conception is a miracle! His sacred, spotless childhood is a miracle! His perfectly sinless character is a miracle! The power He displayed when He gave eyes to the blind, unstopped the ears of the deaf, and raised the dead to life with a word of command, is a miracle! The wisdom He showed when He spake, as never man spake, is a miracle! His wonderful composure amid trials, such as would have ruffled the serenity of an angel, is a miracle! The Godlike spirit which induced Him to pray for His enemies, even when they were nailing Him to the cross amid gibes, sarcasms, and cruel reproaches, is a miracle! The strong cry with which, amid unparalleled agonies, He voluntarily gave up His life, is a miracle! His resurrection, in which all the great acts of His life culminated, is a stupendous miracle!

This entire life, for which the world had been prepared by a series of miraculous events, beginning almost with the creation of man, and from which another stream of miraculous events has been flowing on towards the final consummation of mundane existence, is a lofty platform of the supernatural! There is positively nothing natural in it. Our opponents are right in assuming that the religion of Christ will die the moment they succeed in making good their theories against the possibility of miracles. Christianity stands or falls with its miracles. If miracles are impossible, Christianity is a tissue of improbable, grotesque, and ludicrous fables.

2 The negation of miracles, in the second place, implies the annihilation of all religion whatever. Religion presupposes, cannot but presuppose, the possibility of higher powers acting in the sphere of life for the benefit of man. If higher powers cannot possibly penetrate through the network of natural forces into the theatre of life, on which man, in his helplessness, raises a ceaseless, plaintive, and agonised cry for help, religion becomes a solemn farce, and worship a mummerly. If God is so decidedly confined within the prison walls of His own laws that He cannot possibly help us, the less we think of Him the better.

The ancient philosopher believed that God, after the trouble of creation, had retired into a dormitory above the heavens, determined to remain for ever in a state of blissful passivity, and he very properly taught mankind to do without Him. The idolater believes that God has left the world under the management and control of a number of inferior deities, and he consistently teaches us to lose sight of Him altogether in our devotional exercises and religious observances. The modern philosopher, however, after having thrown God into the background, and made over the world to the tender mercies of a number of blind and senseless laws, pretends to honour God, and talks of the consolations of religion! If God cannot possibly interfere with or control His own laws, and act directly in the sphere of life, let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die!

Religion in our case implies *objectively* supernatural help from God, and *subjectively* a supernatural change of heart.

a The substratum or basis of religion, in the words of Schleiermacher, so often and in so many forms quoted by Theodore Parker, is our sense of dependence upon a power higher than our own, a sense of which nothing but sheer madness can completely divest us. Our condition in life is

one of absolute helplessness. The laws of nature around us are, in consequence of that fatal tendency in us which places us in a state of hostility to them, our enemies, not allies, and no conceivable help can be obtained from them. Nor can we reasonably expect any from our own selves, our weakness being complete. Surrounded by difficulties which we cannot obviate by our own unassisted strength, and debarred from all *natural* help, properly so called, we instinctively cry for that which comes from above, from Him who controls and regulates the mighty forces of nature. And the descent of this help, in the shape of assuring truth, convincing light, and necessary guidance, may be represented as religion in its objective phasis. But if miracles are impossible, the instinctive cry for supernatural help raised by man everywhere on the globe is vain, and objective religion ceases to exist. A universal and inalienable longing of the soul exists only to find nothing either in or out of nature fitted to gratify it, and the Being who has implanted it, but cannot possibly contribute to its gratification, has, like Mill's God of limited power, no alternative but to weep over His own mistake !

b Religion in its subjective aspect does not fare better. There is a law in operation within us, called by philosophers the law of our being, but in Scripture the law of sin and death—a law as imperious and unalterable as any of the laws in the physical world. If this law were allowed to have its own way, our destruction would only be a question of time. It must be interfered with, counteracted, and neutralised—that is, a miracle must be wrought in us, ere we can be saved at all. Conversion, regeneration, and sanctification are moral miracles wrought in the solitude of the human heart, and if miracles are impossible, religion in its subjective phasis ceases to exist. *No miracles, no religion*—such is therefore the conclusion to which even a little reasoning is calculated to bring us.

Here we cannot help pointing out a glaring inconsistency in the attitude assumed by our Brahmo friends with reference to the question of miracles. They admit the possibility of moral miracles, but peremptorily deny the possibility of physical miracles. They believe in conversion, regeneration, and sanctification, and look upon and represent them as miracles wrought by the Spirit of God in the recesses of the human heart. God illuminates, awakens, converts, and sanctifies our hearts in contravention of the law of our being, the law of sin and death, but He cannot feed us in times of famine, or smooth our pillows in sickness, or mitigate our sufferings in the hour of death, because of the physical laws in operation on these distressing occasions. His immediate action in the solitude of the soul is admitted, but His immediate action in the sphere of external nature is denied. Miracles in one department of nature are declared possible, but miracles in another department of nature are vehemently represented as impossible. The gross inconsistency of such a view is apparent!

Many of the current objections against the possibility of miracles proceed from a misapprehension of their nature. An attempt to set forth their nature must precede, or rather is virtually, an attempt to refute these objections.

Many, long, wordy, and learned definitions of miracles have of late been attempted both by Christian apologists and infidel writers, but the one ordinarily given is the best for all purposes of sound reasoning. Miracles are supernatural acts performed by Divine power in attestation of some important moral or religious truth, or of the commission and authority of an accredited messenger from God. This definition is by no means faultless—is objectionable at first sight on the score of prolixity and redundancy. But it has one merit—it sets forth prominently the characteristic feature of miracles. The principal element of miracles is

not the rarity of their occurrence. Miracles must necessarily occur rarely.

The objectors, who regard them as incredible on account of their infrequency, forget that if they occurred every day they would cease to be miracles. But the rarity of their occurrence, though an indispensable feature of miracles, is not their peculiar, characteristic element. Nor is their magnificence or impressiveness their principal characteristic feature. Miracles must be stupendous and impressive events, for if they were otherwise, they would be classed with ordinary events, and so cease to have any special effect. But their impressiveness, though an indispensable element, is not their distinguishing or distinctive feature. Comets are rarely seen, and thunderstorms are magnificent and impressive, but they are not to be classed with miracles. Again, the principal feature of miracles is not to be sought in their astounding character, or because they strike wonder into the hearts of all spectators. A railway train shooting across an Indian village, with something like the rapidity of a flash of lightning, may strike wonder into the hearts of its simple inhabitants, but the progress of a railway train is not a miracle. The principal characteristic of miracles is that they are the immediate manifestation of Divine power.

Miracles are events which the forces of nature, if left to themselves, would never have brought about, and hence they manifest the intervention of some power higher than those of nature, the interposition of Divine power. They are signs and wonders, not wonders only—that is, events of an astounding character, fitted to strike wonder into the hearts of all spectators—but signs also fitted to set forth the finger of God.

Miracles, moreover, have a particular, specific, and personal significance. They set their seal to, or attest some truth of religion, or the authority of an accredited messenger from God. In one sense all the phenomena of

nature are miracles—they all display the creative and constructive energy, and the ruling power of God. The blade of grass that shoots out of the solid earth, the air that whispers and whistles and roars according to fixed laws, and the heavenly bodies that move silently around common centres in the amplitude of space, are all miracles, and they all set forth the power and wisdom of God. But their meaning is general, not particular and personal. While they set forth the power of God, they cannot be brought forward in attestation of some particular revelation of His will or of the authority of a bearer of some important message from Him.

Nature is a grand storehouse of miracles, but because its course is uniform, it cannot demonstrate the credibility of an extraordinary revelation of God's will demanded by an extraordinary exigency of human life. To set forth the obligation under which we are to receive an extraordinary message from God, some displays of His might, other than those ordinarily noticed in the sphere of nature, are needed, and such manifestations of Divine power are called miracles.

Now comes the important question—Are miracles suspensions or violations of the laws of nature? When miracles are wrought, are the laws of nature either held in abeyance or broken? To this question our most emphatic reply is—*No*. Miracles do not imply either a suspension or a violation of the laws of nature. They simply imply an interference with or a control over the laws of nature. The miracle-worker does not set aside established sequences, he simply brings forward certain new consequents by calling into action certain new antecedents.

Take for example one of the miracles recorded in the Bible—the Old Testament miracle of the axe floating on the surface of water. Here the effect is miraculous, for the specific gravity of the iron being greater than that of

the water, it ought to sink beneath rather than float on its surface, and if the law of gravitation were left unchecked and uncontrolled in this case, its disappearance beneath the watery mass would be the consequence. But a new antecedent is called into action—viz, Divine power, and it necessarily, and according to a higher law of the universe, controls and overcomes the natural forces in operation, and thereby produces an effect which these forces left to themselves could never have produced.

Suppose I cause the axe to float on the surface of the water by holding and moving it with my right hand. My power, or the power of my will, communicated through the muscles and sinews of my arm, interferes with and overpowers the natural forces in operation so completely that the reverse of their natural result is the consequence. The difference between this case and the miracle under review is this: in the one case the visible power of man is the antecedent, and in the other the unseen power of God is the antecedent, while in both there is a controlment, rather than a violation, of the laws of nature.

It is by no means difficult to prove the possibility of such interference with or control over the laws of nature. The higher powers of nature do, as a matter of fact, counteract and neutralise the lower ones. The laws of organic matter counteract those of inorganic matter. The blade of grass which shoots upwards, or the gigantic tree which spreads its branches over an extensive area, does so in spite of the law of gravitation. When the elephant raises its proboscis to pull down a branch above its head, does it not counteract and neutralise the law of gravitation? Or when I raise my right hand heavenward, do I not oppose, counteract, and neutralise the same universal law of the material world? Again, when we cause water to rise from a cistern or well by means of a pump, or convert by means of a beautiful contrivance the perpendicular motion of the piston-rod into

the circular motion of the beam, do we not counteract some of the immutable laws of nature? Now, when man, the lower animals, and even trees and plants, can control and overpower the forces of nature, is it reasonable to conclude that God cannot possibly do so? What science, what ingenuity of reasoning, can prove that God cannot possibly do what the worms that crawl on the earth and the vegetable germs that shoot forth only to die can easily perform?

The nature of miracles, then, shows that they are not suspensions or violations of the laws in operation in the physical world. But this fact may be further shown by a reference to their *modus operandi*, or the mode in which they are wrought. With reference to this mode, the Scripture miracles may be divided into two classes—viz, *those which are the results of direct creative acts*, and *those which are brought about by what is called an intensification of the laws of nature*.

a Some of the miracles recorded in the Bible are the results of direct creative acts. Take for instance the miracle of the immaculate conception of our Lord in the womb of a virgin, or the large quantity of bread created when Christ fed five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes. Far from implying a suspension or violation of the laws of nature, these miracles do not even imply an interference with, or a controlment of these laws. They are acts *above* the sphere of natural forces. Are they impossible? Who will stand up, and in the midst of this boundless creation affirm that creative acts are impossible? Does not the mind instinctively go back to the time when this world was not, and when an act of creation caused matter in at least an unformed and chaotic state to spring out of nothing? Or, if this is a beautiful fiction of religion, does not the science of geology bring to light successive acts of creation? If that science is not a dream, there was a time when the climate of the world was too hot to sustain

even the lowest forms of life. A cycle of geologic development passed away, and its temperature having been to some extent cooled, God interposed and created the lower types of life. Another cycle of material progress passed away, and the higher forms of life were brought upon the stage by fresh acts of creation. And, finally, when the preparatory process had reached a degree of perfection, man made his appearance, called into existence by what may be called the crowning act of creation.

How are we to explain these successive acts of creation, these oft-recurring interpositions of Divine power indubitably proved by the science of geology? Of course the evolutionist steps in, and pretends to remove all difficulty by tracing our pedigree, through long lines of monkey and tadpole ancestors, back to the primeval slime, but his beautiful theory has not a shadow of proof to rest upon. While he dreams and raves, geology proves that acts of creation were performed in prehistoric times and if they were possible then, they are certainly possible now.

But the majority of the miracles recorded in the Bible are the results of an intensification of the laws of nature. When, for instance, God destroyed the world by a flood, or when He cut a pathway for the Israelites through the Red Sea, He brought about extraordinary events by intensifying the forces of nature. The miraculous cures which are so prominent a feature in gospel history, are the results of a resuscitation and intensification of the recuperative powers of nature. The miraculous draught of fishes is the result of an extraordinary impetus communicated to the gregarious instincts of the finny creation. Is the intensifying process presupposed in this class of miracles possible? Who will stand up and assert that it is impossible?

We human beings, by our unassisted power, not merely control and overcome the laws of nature, but often intensify and heighten their operation. When a little child lifts up

an enormous weight by means of a system of levers or pulleys, or when we, by simply confining a quantity of steam in a cylinder, cause it to propel a locomotive attached to scores of cars crammed with gay travellers, are not the laws of nature intensified? And when we can intensify the forces of nature, and make them subserve our purpose, is it philosophical to represent God as absolutely incapable of doing so?

Miracles, then, are not *anomalies*, or events brought about in contravention of the laws of nature. They certainly interfere with and interrupt some of the laws of nature, but they do not run counter to that system of laws by which the material world is governed. A comet in its movements does not obey the laws of our solar system, but it obeys some law, and marches forward in its apparently erratic orbit in accordance with that complete and perfect system of laws by which the movements of the starry spheres are regulated. And so, though miracles apparently contravene this or that particular law of nature, they are not *lawless*.

When we take a comprehensive view of the powers and forces of nature, we find one grand law in operation—*viz*, that when lower forces come in contact with higher ones, they are overcome and neutralised. Miracles are wrought in accordance with this universal law, and hence they cannot be stigmatised as anomalies.

Nor are miracles *unnatural* events. The evils miracles are intended to remove are certainly unnatural, but the miracles themselves are most natural and most reasonable. It was more natural on the part of Christ to heal the unfortunate man who had been blind from his birth than to leave him unhelped in his miserable condition, more natural to feed five thousand hungry men in a miraculous manner than to disperse them starved and famished, more natural to restore Lazarus to his weeping sisters than to

make his separation from them permanent and irrevocable.

When the feats or displays of power chronicled are unnatural and capricious, their historical truth may justly be questioned, but when, as in the case of Scripture miracles, they are both natural and reasonable, and subserve, moreover, an important moral purpose, they are *prima facie* worthy of being accepted as real occurrences or established facts. But I need not at present make any observations on this point, it will have to be elucidated or dilated on when, in pursuance of our plan, we have to treat of the important question of the credibility of gospel miracles.

According to Dr Christlieb, whom we have followed in many of the remarks we have made, there are many "catch-words" invented by modern infidelity to bring miracles into disrepute. We will conclude with a few observations on one of these. Strauss represents a miracle as "a rent in the harmony of nature." Nature is a perfect organism, and its parts are so nicely adjusted to each other that a rent or break in its harmony is sure to derange the entire machinery. A rent in nature is therefore impossible, and as miracles are rents in nature, they are impossible.

Now, granting that miracles are rents in the harmony of nature, we maintain that science goes out of its province when it arbitrarily represents them as impossible. The province of science is the province of facts, not the province of possibilities. Science can affirm—if it can do so—that the course of nature has not been interrupted up to date, but science goes out of its province when it affirms that no interruption will ever, or can ever take place.

Science can affirm that the sequences of nature have manifested a harmonious and beautiful uniformity during the past ages of the world; but science is unscientific the moment it affirms that this uniformity shall continue for ever.

undisturbed The first assertion—if made good—would involve a fact, but the second would involve a theory. The fact might be accepted, but the theory built upon it might be set aside as unworthy of acceptance.

But science cannot possibly prove that the harmonious course of nature has not been interrupted up to date. We have already shown that rents have occurred in the harmony of nature to make room, for instance, for the appearance of the lower forms of life, then of the higher ones, and ultimately of man. And if these have occurred without interrupting the harmony of nature, it is absurd to talk of the certainty of its entire machinery being deranged in consequence of miraculous interpositions of Divine power.

Again, persons who talk in this strain overlook the *elasticity* of nature, or the possibility of its admitting the acts of free agents without endangering the uniformity of its course. You will remember the celebrated statement of Fichte regarding a grain of sand. Suppose a grain of sand appears a few inches off from the spot whereon it is found, an almost endless chain of new antecedents must be presupposed to account for the fact. The wave by which it was deposited must have proceeded a few inches forward, the wind by which the wave was propelled must have blown a trifle harder, the atmospheric conditions preceding the motion of that wind must have been different from what they were, these altered conditions might have destroyed the crops which fed the father of the party who sees the grain of sand, the father might have died, and the son might never have been born!

But all this chain of antecedents would be a beautiful conceit of the head if the grain of sand, instead of being driven forward by a wave, were removed by my hand. I can remove the particle with the greatest ease without disturbing the antecedents or the consequents conjured up like so many phantoms by the imagination of the philosopher.

So that there is room in nature for the independent action of the mind or will ; and there certainly is room for the independent action of the Will which controls and regulates all the physical and moral forces of which it is the grand storehouse

But rents are noticeable in the harmony of nature, not one or two, but a long, unbroken, and almost endless chain of rents Nature in all her departments bears vestiges of a widespread, universal, and all-comprehensive disturbance , and the disturbing influence is not miracle, but *sin* The boasted harmony of nature has long since been disturbed, her original order unhinged, and an abnormal state of things called into existence by that which is the cause "of man's first disobedience and all our woe."

It is somewhat strange to talk of the harmony of nature in the midst of disorder and anomaly Look at the condition of man, the Lord of Creation, with the lower animals in a state of rebellion against him , his authority despised, his glory trailed in the dust, and his person insulted by the meanest insect,—look at the relative condition of man in this world, and tell us if this is the primitive state of things Look at the regular system of destruction that operates side by side with the system of life, and then say if the harmony of nature has continued undisturbed Look at disease and death in their ten thousand frightful forms, at the arrow that flieth by day, and the pestilence that walketh in darkness ;—look at vice in all its impurity and filth, and crime in all its horrors, and then say if there are no rents in the harmony of nature To talk of the impossibility of rents in this world of disorder is something like talking of the stability of empires amid the existing ruins of Rome or Athens !

If this sin-created order of things is allowed to go on undisturbed, this harmony of disorder, so to speak, left intact, the complete destruction of nature is only a question of time. A remedial system is needed to bring nature back

to its pristine condition of harmony and glory, and God has introduced, and is maturing such a system by a series of gracious interpositions. Surely God can interpose, suspend, or set aside the laws of nature, if you choose this form of expression, to save a perishing world! If He cannot, He is a puppet on the throne of the universe, not a reigning Sovereign!

Miracles, therefore, are not capricious acts, but connected manifestations of a Higher Law ushered in to restore sin-deformed nature to its original harmony. Miracles are not rents, but magnificent appendages of a system introduced to do away with rents. Miracles are not disturbances, but the attractive accompaniments of an arrangement calculated to heal all disturbances. And therefore miracles tend to restore nature to the harmony it has lost, and man to that state of purity and bliss from which he has fallen.

If you, my friends, have a wish to form something like an adequate idea of the disturbance around you, you have only to look into the disturbance within you. Your heart is like the troubled sea, its affections, passions, desires, and aspirations being all in a state of awful commotion. There are big rents in it, envy, malice, jealousy, rage, pride, ambition, avarice, and lust, and these combined make it a scene of disorder and anomaly. And who can describe its misery and wretchedness, its sorrows, disappointments, griefs, and agonies?

Now what the state of the heart within you is, that is the state of the world around you. And the object of true religion is to remedy the evil in and around you. You can easily test your religion, or see whether it is the remedy provided by God for sin or not.

If your religion—whatever it may be, whether Comtism or Brahmoism, or refined Hinduism—is healing the disorders in you, satisfying the noblest yearnings of your souls, and making your heart the abode of peace and joy, if it is

making you God-like in your affections, feelings, thoughts, and desires, if it is raising you as far above the prudential, utilitarian morality recognised in the world as the heaven is above the earth, if it is breeding in you a love which, like the love of God, embraces your enemies as well as your friends, and urges you to deeds of sublime self-sacrifice, such as bear the impress of the Divine nature on them, then your religion is from God, and you need not be in quest of another. But if your religion fails to rectify the disorders within you, to give you rest, and to make you God-like, it is time for you to cast it aside, and earnestly and prayerfully look for another

THE PHILOSOPHICAL OBJECTIONS AGAINST MIRACLES.

THE subject of this discourse—viz, Philosophical Objections against Miracles—may lead you to look upon my arrangement as faulty “Why,” you may ask, “do you put that first which ought to be put last? Why do you not first take notice of popular objections against miracles, and then rise, by what may be called a natural ascent, to those which are philosophical?”

To explain why I adopt this apparently erratic course, let me relate a little anecdote You have of course heard the name of Dr Chalmers, and are aware that he was the most powerful preacher of his day, not only in Scotland, but perhaps in all Europe Crowds always attended his ministry To abate the pressure, he adopted the expedient of repeating his morning sermon in the evening, without effect On one occasion, when conversing with Dr Wardlaw, he spoke of the method he was constrained to adopt, and very naïvely asked Dr Wardlaw if he ever did the same Dr Wardlaw laughed outright, and said that few needed to do so

If you ask me why I do not take notice of popular objections against miracles, I reply There are no popular objections against miracles. Mankind instinctively believe

in the supernatural. So long as they allow sound common sense to guide them, they never for a moment doubt the possibility of miracles, but when they abandon its guidance and covet that of science, falsely so called, then indeed they find themselves on the giddy pinnacle of transcendental thought, and doubt not merely the possibility of miracles, but their own existence also,—then they look upon God as a phantom, the world as a phantom, and themselves as miserable phantoms !

To set forth what I call the *unnatural* character of the objections raised against a supernatural agency, I have to call your attention to two well-attested and incontrovertible facts

Observe, in the first place, that belief in a supernatural agency or—which is the same thing—the possibility of miracles, is both *natural* and *instinctive*. It is an original and irrepressible tendency of our nature, a tendency as strong and ubiquitous as what is called the religious principle in man. How do we prove the existence, universality, and boundless influence of the instinct in man which makes him a religious being ?

We examine the facts of the case—we examine man in various conditions of life, in different grades of civilisation, and different stages of intellectual and moral culture, and we never find him without a positive faith, without an object of worship, a shrine of devotion, a form of prayer, and prescribed ceremonies of religion

Behold him basking in almost unclouded sunshine on the topmost pinnacle of material and moral civilisation, and you find that the brightest jewel of the crown of glory that encircles his brow is religion. Behold him roaming brute-like in what is called a state of nature, without a fixed habitation, a settled government, and even the ordinary comforts of life, and you find that, whatever else he has not, a religion he has. Examine him in all the intermediate con-

ditions of life—through all the links of that vast chain which connects these two extremes,—and you find that the thing which plays the most conspicuous part in his affairs, and occupies often the most prominent place in his heart, is religion

And therefore a comprehensive, or what Mill in his *Logic* calls a complete induction of facts, leads you irresistibly to the conclusion that man has an ineradicable instinct which makes him a religious being. And the great sacrifices he is willing to make in obedience to this tendency of his nature prove that its influence is omnipotent. Well, in this way precisely we can prove that man has an inextinguishable and irrepressible instinct which leads him, almost with the certainty of a law of nature, to believe in the possibility of miracles

In all stages of human culture, from the highest platform of civilisation down to the lowest depths of barbarism, you never find man without an instinctive faith in the supernatural, and as recognised phases of faith, impressive forms of devotion, consecrated places of worship, and sacred feasts and fasts, indicate the existence and power of the religious principle in man, the innumerable stories of marvels, prodigies, and miracles, which compose by far the largest portion of the religious literature of the world, indicate the existence and power of his original and instinctive belief in a supernatural agency

Add to all this the significant fact that all the sophism and fallacies which are needed to extinguish man's natural belief in the existence of God, are also needed to rob him of his instinctive faith in those special interpositions of His power which are called miracles

Observe, in the second place, that man naturally and instinctively believes, not merely in the possibility, but in the actual occurrence of miracles. Man believes not only that miracles are possible, but that miracles have been

wrought. If all the numberless miraculous stories, which cut so prominent a figure in the religious literature of the world, are put together, what a tremendous heap of prodigies, wonders, and marvels you will have before you ! Collect only the marvels and wonders composing the voluminous mythology of one nation, say the Hindus—marvels and wonders said to have been scattered broadcast, so to speak, by innumerable persons, in innumerable places, and on innumerable occasions during a period of three or four thousand years—and you cannot but have an interminable mass before you. And when to this mass you add all the miracles that have ever appeared in the shape of legends, traditions, and sober narratives beyond the precincts of the country, you will very likely stand aghast before a heap, the length, breadth, and height of which human language will fail to indicate. Your instinct at once tells you that all these innumerable signs and wonders cannot possibly be true. A few excepted, they must all be false miracles.

Now, what does the existence of false miracles prove ? To answer this question, let me put another. What does the existence of counterfeit coins prove ? Do they not prove the existence somewhere of genuine coins ? If genuine coins had not existed, false coins could not possibly have been stamped and circulated. If the originals had never existed, the copies could not possibly have been brought into existence. This is as clear as noonday light. The occurrence of false miracles necessarily proves the occurrence of true miracles.

Had miracles not been actually wrought within the limits of what is called the historic period of mundane existence the phenomenon of the currency of false miracles would have itself been a miracle. You will see the force of this argument the more you think over it. The existence of false revelations proves the existence somewhere of the true revelation, the existence of false miracles proves the exist-

ence of true miracles, as decidedly as the existence of counterfeit coins proves the existence of genuine coins

Here I am tempted to notice an inconsistency of the Brahmos other than the one I dwelt upon in my last Lecture Brahmoism appears to regenerate the world with an ostentatiously simple creed Separate all the original beliefs of humanity from the mass of errors under which they lie buried, place them in order, or formulate them into a creed, and you have Brahmoism in all the majesty of its simplicity But here is an original and instinctive belief—belief in miracles—abandoned, opposed, and even held in contempt Are we, then, to discriminate between our intuitive convictions, accept some of them as true, and reject others as false? If so, where is the standard of truth such as will enable us to sit in judgment on our intuitions, and separate those which are acceptable from those which ought to be cast overboard?

According to Dr Christlieb, Philosophical Objections against miracles group themselves or cluster round the two doctrines which are becoming fashionable in some quarters in these days—the doctrines of the immanence of God in the world, and the transcendence of God above the world If we set aside Atheism and Mill's Theism, which is worse than Atheism, we shall find that the doctrine which deifies nature, and that which separates God completely from His creation, are the nuclei of all the objections so vehemently and triumphantly advanced in these days against a supernatural agency If God were immanent in nature, if the laws of nature were the only actualisation of the will of God, or if there were no will independently of the powers and forces in operation in the sphere of nature,—in fine, if nature were the form of Divine existence, and God its concealed spirit, miracles could not possibly be wrought

Again, if God actually did relieve Himself of the irksome task of controlling the affairs of the world, and then sink

into a state of passivity and dormancy, miracles could not but be impossible. But these two doctrines are from their nature not susceptible of either scientific or philosophical proof. Science cannot possibly prove either the immanence of God in the world, or His complete separation from it. Science cannot penetrate into the heart of creation, and there behold the vital breath by which its arteries and veins are made warm with the blood of life. Science cannot penetrate into the sequestered dormitory within which the Deity, tired of creation, has fallen into an eternal sleep of indolence and passivity. Philosophy cannot prove these doctrines—is in keen antagonism to these doctrines !

Our intuitive beliefs and principles, which form the substratum or groundwork of philosophy, are arrayed against them. We naturally and instinctively shrink from the daring impiety of either confounding God with creation, or throwing God into the shade. In short, it is as unphilosophical to affirm that God is not distinct from the world or that God does not rule, as to affirm that God does not exist. Foster is right when he says that a person must be a God before he can prove the non-existence of a God. His experience must be co-extensive with creation in all its illimitable vastness—must include, not only every spot in space, but every moment of time in the past or the future eternity, he must know all the causes in operation in the universe, all kinds of forces, all varieties of means, and all orders of beings, before he can be in possession of all the facts needed to justify the conclusion that there is no God.

With the great thinker named, we may affirm that a man must be a God in order to prove either the immanence of God in the world or His complete transcendence above it. God may now be setting forth His personality or His direct control in some one of the planets which revolve round the sun, say Jupiter, or in some one of the stars whose light has

not yet reached our globe, with an evidence such as even he cannot resist

God may now be acting as a person without the intervention of natural laws in some corner of creation, to which he cannot possibly be carried by the fleetest locomotive in ten millions of years, and it is simply absurd of him to say that vestiges of Divine personality and Divine control cannot be found anywhere in the universe, unless his knowledge embraces all time and all space, that is, unless he himself becomes a God, he cannot legitimately affirm that nature is God, or that God has nothing whatever to do with the world

The two doctrines, then, from which all philosophical objections against miracles derive their being and their power, are themselves not susceptible of proof. They occupy a prominent place among those creations of the imagination which are confessedly unsubstantial and shadowy. And if these doctrines are mere fictions, the arguments which are based on, or proceed from them cannot but be of a fictitious nature. The children must partake of the nature of the mother, and if the mother has no existence except in the heated imagination of a philosophical dreamer, the children cannot but be phantoms and ghosts. It is therefore not at all necessary for us to take the trouble of exposing the fallacy of these objections against miracles—objections which derive their importance, not from their intrinsic worth, but from the great names associated with them, objections which, if they had only been urged by ordinary men, would have been passed over as unworthy of notice.

But as many of our educated countrymen set a high value on them, and never lose an opportunity of representing them as unanswerable, it is worth while to attempt a formal exposure of the fallacies which lurk beneath them. These objections are but different editions of two antiquated and

absurd objections—viz, that associated with the name of Spinoza, and that associated with the name of Hume I shall state these, and place before you, in my own words, the most satisfactory answers, by which they were exploded long before you and I were born

Your veneration for the great infidel writers of the day is so great that you will, perhaps, be disagreeably surprised to hear that, as opponents of Christianity, they are only imitators, not original thinkers, followers rather than leaders. They revive and ventilate exploded arguments and stale objections, just as entrance candidates reproduce stale criticism in their examination papers. They are, however, superior imitators, and they manage to arrange old commodities with a skill such as throws an air of novelty over them. They reproduce worn-out and threadbare arguments, but in a manner which invests them with originality and attractiveness. Stale things become in their hands fresh, old reasonings become new, and objections which, when reproduced by ordinary hacks, would be positively intolerable, become, under the charm of their chaste style and skilful treatment, both attractive and imposing.

We educated natives are at best but clumsy imitators, and can never manage to conceal what we borrow under an air of originality and freshness. But though ahead of us in the science or art of imitation, I wish you particularly to observe that the arguments they parade are but new editions of such as have been again and again exploded, and that if those whom they imitate failed to annihilate Christianity, they cannot be expected to do so with their borrowed and rusty weapons.

Let me begin with the argument which, though less celebrated than Hume's, is not so decidedly marked by sophistical reasoning—we mean the argument associated with the name of Spinoza. It may not be amiss to say that, though the father of modern Pantheism, Spinoza was a man of a

modest, retiring disposition and irreproachable morals, and that his life was decidedly loftier than the theological principles by which it was matured. The basis of his objection is that Pantheism which, though multiform in its nature and Proteus-like in its phases, never fails to identify the laws of nature with the will of God.

Nature is the only form of Divine existence, and God its vivifying soul. Nature is the shell within which the Deity lies completely and irrevocably imprisoned. His condition is worse, as Archbishop Trench justly says, than that of the meanest of His creatures in this world. The snail confined within its hard and almost globular shell, though apparently wretched, can move from place to place, and choose, so to speak, an abode for itself. But God has no such choice! The insect confined within the cocoon is wretched indeed, but it has a bright hope, even that of bursting its silken shell, and flitting from flower to flower in the form of a bright, resplendent butterfly. But God has no such hope!

Spinoza's argument consists of some assumptions which, with the exception of one, are gratuitous. The one excepted is the assertion that a miracle does not imply a contradiction to one and all "the laws of the universe." We have already shown that, though miracles are apparently in antagonism to this or that law of nature, they are in harmony with that comprehensive, all-embracing system of laws by which the succession of material phenomena, of which we are cognisant, is regulated. Spinoza, of course, means by the laws of the universe what Calvinistic divines mean by the decrees of God, and no person has yet had the hardihood to maintain that the supernatural acts called miracles contravene those secret purposes of the Deity which the evolutions of Providence carry out and exhibit.

Spinoza assumes that as miracles imply defects in creation they are impossible. A miracle is, in his opinion, an after-expedient, or makeshift to remedy a defect in nature. But

a defect in creation—one which cannot be rectified in the course of nature,—and which therefore demands a special interposition of Divine power—is really a reflection on the wisdom of God, and therefore inconceivable

M Rénan dilates on this point with all the charm of his brilliant but superficial eloquence The substance of what he says is this —A watch does not need the watchmaker's interference so long as its machinery is in good order, but when a screw is loose somewhere, when a wheel is broken, or a spring is rusty, the renewed application to the mechanism of the skill of its maker is peremptorily demanded But such a break in the perfect organism of nature is impossible, and therefore such an interference with its smooth course as is implied in a miracle is impossible also

But the assertion that a defect in nature is impossible sounds strange in a world so terribly full of the dire consequences of sin, in a world the history of which is like the roll of the prophet, written within and without with lamentation and woe The man who talks of the stability of empires amid the ruins of Athens or Rome is the worthy brother of him who talks of the indefectibility of nature amid the ravages, physical and moral, of sin.

But waiving this fact, we may affirm that Spinoza in hazarding this assertion falls into the same unaccountable mistake into which Comte has fallen in his estimate of theology Comte thinks that a theology is needed, or has been manufactured, to explain physical phenomena, rather than to satisfy the inextinguishable yearnings of the human soul Similarly, Spinoza thinks that the object of miraculous interpositions of Divine power is to rectify defects in the physical world, rather than to inaugurate and attest a remedial scheme fitted to save men from the power and punishment of sin

Spinoza further maintains that by encouraging a belief in miracles we lead man to look for a supernatural help which

will never come, and to forget his duty, which is to obey implicitly the laws of nature. Now I most emphatically deny that man's business in life is to commit himself implicitly and unreservedly to the guidance of natural laws. I believe in the greatness of nature as much as any enthusiastic scientist of the day. I need not pile up current platitudes to set forth the greatness of nature—need not direct your attention to the innumerable radiant worlds which the telescope reveals to our wondering gaze, or the innumerable teeming hives of population which the microscope reveals in a fading leaf or a withering flower. I would not descant on the glories over our heads and the wonders underneath our feet, to prove what perhaps you are more willing to admit than I am. I believe in the greatness of nature, but I believe at the same time that the greatness of nature enhances the greatness of man.

Man's position in creation is higher than that of nature—nature is dead, but man is alive. Nature is irrational, but man is rational. Nature is not a responsible agent, but man is accountable for all he thinks, or says, or does. Nature cannot but follow the directions of God, but man has the terrible power given him of opposing the will of God. Nature cannot but obey, but man can choose between obedience and disobedience.

Why should man's business in life be represented as unreasoning and implicit obedience to the mandates of nature? Man rationally commits himself to the guidance of God, but man becomes irrational the moment he looks upon nature as his guide. Add to this the fact that if we do commit ourselves to the guidance of its blind laws, our destruction becomes only a question of time, and you at once see the unreasonableness of the advice volunteered by Spinoza.

We now turn to David Hume, a very different man from Spinoza, a nihilist in theory, and a libertine in practice, a

philosopher whose moral perceptions were so decidedly blunted that he looked upon adultery not only as a pardonable freak of passion, but as a virtue. But we have nothing at present to do with his character, our business being to show the absurdity of the reasoning he has marshalled against the possibility of miracles. His argument is a miserable sophism, and the popularity it has gained among infidel writers of all degrees of culture, and all varieties of temperament, has always been a great mystery to me. The figure it has cut in Christian controversy is by no means contemptible. The contemporaries of Hume looked upon it as a marvel of philosophic ingenuity and acuteness. The infidel railer hailed it, amid deafening shouts of joy, as a death-blow inflicted on the Christian religion through the medium of its miraculous story, and the Christian apologist thought that the very life of his cherished faith depended on his success in exposing its fallacy, and neutralising its influence.

And even in these days, although the advocates of Christianity are regularly tired of exposing its sophistical character, the infidel writers are not ashamed to point it out as a thoroughly decisive argument against miracles. Strauss speaks of it in the highest terms of praise, and his brother rationalists do nothing but reproduce it under a variety of new forms. The fact that an argument so obviously and egregiously fallacious is looked upon and blazoned by the champions of scepticism as a regular palladium of strength, shows that they are in the predicament of a shipwrecked mariner, to whom the most fragile plank brought nigh by a rolling billow is a godsend!

There is one point in connection with Hume's celebrated objection against miracles, which, though perhaps intentionally passed over by his friends, has been unaccountably overlooked by the opponents of his anti miraculous theory. The glaring inconsistency of Hume's argument with his own

pet philosophical theory has not been formally noticed even by Christian apologists

His argument is based on the iron inflexibility of the laws of nature, but, according to his favourite system of philosophy, there are no such things as laws of nature. He unequivocally denies the doctrine of efficient as well as that of final causes. He admits that some antecedents are uniformly followed by some consequents, but he peremptorily denies the causal relationship which makes the order necessary and unchangeable. The same antecedents are followed by the same consequents by mere chance, rather than by any inherent power in the antecedents to bring about the consequents. If such is the case, there are no such things as laws of nature except in the loose sense of general classifications, no such forces as will justify our stating that the same antecedents will invariably be followed by the same consequents. And if laws of nature are fictitious things, all talk of their inflexibility and unchangeableness is nonsense. Hume's argument is based, according to his own theory, on the fictitious inviolability of fictitious laws. It is, therefore, a dream! The flexibility of sentiment which Hume shows when he arrays against miracles an argument incompatible with his favourite philosophical notions is remarkable, and it shows that infidel philosophers will gladly cast aside their pet theories when their unconquerable antipathy to Christianity demands the sacrifice. 'Theirs are not the errors of the head only, but the errors of the heart also!'

But we come to the argument itself. It may be stated in two different forms, and it does not require much ingenuity to show that, in each of these forms, it is a tissue of gratuitous assumptions and paradoxes.

The simplest form in which his argument against miracles may be stated is as follows — Nature is constant and inviolable, while human testimony is variable, and when there is a contest between nature and human testimony, the weaker

must succumb to the stronger, in a story partaking of the marvellous or the miraculous, there is a contest between nature and human testimony, and the latter being the weaker, must succumb to the power which is the stronger, therefore miracles cannot be proved by human testimony. Historians do not tell us whether, when Hume had fairly worked out his objection, he threw up his hat, and looked upon the rapid annihilation of Christianity as an accomplished fact. My own impression is that he clearly noticed its sophistical texture, and laughed immoderately, though in his sleeves, at the folly of those who represented it as a masterpiece of philosophical reasoning!

Does it need much ingenuity to show that this argument is a string of gratuitous assumptions and naked absurdities? Nature, says Hume, is constant and invariable. What does he mean? If he means that nature is generally constant and invariable, the assertion does not at all affect the question of miracles. The advocates of Christian miracles not only admit that nature is generally constant and invariable, but maintain, with perfect unanimity, that there could be no miracles if nature were not constant and invariable. Hume evidently means that nature has always been constant and invariable, or that it has never deviated from its uniform course. But this is just the thing that he has to prove. We allege that nature has, at particular times and for important purposes, deviated from its ordinary, uniform course, but Hume, in reply, says that this cannot be proved by human testimony, because nature has never deviated from its ordinary, uniform course! Does he not postulate the very thing that he has to prove?

Again, Hume says that human testimony is variable and fallacious. What does he mean? If he means that human testimony generally deceives us, or that many kinds of human testimony are fallacious, his assertion is irrelevant, and kills nobody in heaven, earth, or hell. If, however, he means

that human testimony has invariably been fallacious, or that every species of human testimony is deceptive, we most unhesitatingly demur to his assertion. We believe that he is guilty of the fallacy technically called *Fallacia multiplicationis*, or that of upholding a universal proposition, when the facts of the case prove a particular one. We believe that, though many kinds of human testimony are fallacious, there is a species of human testimony which is as reliable, as constant and invariable as nature itself is said to be in his major premise.

Hume affirms, in the third place, that in a miraculous story there is a contest between nature and human testimony. This contest is a dream, and exists nowhere out of his head. In all reliable and trustworthy miraculous stories there is a harmony, not discord, and both nature and testimony speak one and the same language. So all the assertions from which Hume deduces his formidable conclusion are gratuitous.

It is not at all difficult to show that his argument involves a glaring paradox. Hume affirms that nature is constant and invariable. He means, not only that nature is constant and invariable within the narrow circle of his limited experience, but that nature is constant and invariable beyond that narrow circle, and has, moreover, always been so. How does he know that nature has been constant and invariable, say during the last six thousand years which have rolled over the world since the creation of man? Is it not human testimony that conveys this assurance to him? And if human testimony is variable and fallacious, what ground has he for believing that nature is constant? His argument leads to this paradoxical conclusion, that human testimony is reliable when it affirms the constancy of nature, but fallacious when it affirms the possibility of miracles! Human testimony is good enough when it harmonises with his own whims, but it is positively fallacious when it opposes his

preconceived conclusion! Has the heart nothing to do with our opinions?

Hume's argument may be put in another form, a form more in consonance with the mystifying phraseology to which he resorts, possibly to set forth his philosophical acuteness, perhaps to conceal the shallowness and absurdity of his reasoning

A firm and unalterable experience establishes the uniformity of nature, but a variable experience proves the truth of testimony. In a story partaking of the marvellous, a firm and unalterable experience is balanced by a variable experience, and the amount of probability against the event related must be the difference between these two opposing proofs. This amount of adverse probability is doubled and trebled when the story partakes, not only of the marvellous, but of the miraculous, inasmuch as in the latter case the testimony becomes more variable, and therefore weaker. Those who have read the argument as it originally flowed, as it were, from Hume's masterly pen, will admit that it is stated here in almost his own words

The whole argument turns on the meaning of the word "experience." What does Hume mean by it? If he means his own personal experience, all his nice adjustment of probabilities, his logical addition and subtraction, is beside the point. If he means the general or even the universal experience of his own age, his entire line of argumentation is irrelevant. If again he means the general experience of all ages and all countries, his ingenuity and acuteness are literally wasted

When the advocate of Christian miracles brings forward a number of witnesses, who affirmed that they saw a number of miracles wrought before their eyes in a particular place at a particular time, the experience of millions of men who have lived and died without being present in that particular place and at that particular time cannot possibly alter a

single feature of his case To neutralise experience in the case of the witnesses by experience in the case of their opponents, you must prove that the latter, being present at the time, and in the place where the miracles are said to have been wrought, did not witness them To make Hume's argument worth anything, you must suppose him making use of the word "experience" in its broadest sense, as synonymous with the universal experience of all mankind in all ages and all countries But in this sense, his assumption that a firm and unalterable experience establishes the uniformity of nature, is gratuitous Such experience is arrayed in favour of, not against, miracles

Hume's second assertion, that a variable experience establishes the truth of human testimony, is open to serious objection The assertion is accurate when stated as a particular proposition, but egregiously erroneous when stated as a universal proposition, true enough when applied to many species of testimony, but false when applied to all kinds of testimony without distinction

There is a species of testimony which is proved truthful and reliable, not by a variable, but by a firm and unalterable experience There is a species of testimony which cannot be set aside as worthless without doing as much violence to the laws of the moral world as the raising of Lazarus from the dead did to the laws of the physical world Hume is guilty, as I said before, of upholding a general conclusion when the premises support a particular one

If Hume's reasoning were faultless, no fact absolutely new could be believed, inas-much as such a fact would have the universal experience of man arrayed against it. Suppose a new animate creature is discovered, say a flying fish, suppose a person saw for the first time a fish flying upward, and seriously reported the phenomenon, according to Hume's argument, his testimony should be rejected, because it would have the universal experience of men

against it A new discovery, such as the planet called Neptune, or a new invention, such as that embodied in railways or telegraphs, should not be believed, on the score of the obvious discrepancy or contrariety between it and universal experience

Again, if Hume's reasoning were faultless, we could not believe a miracle, even if we saw it wrought under our own eyes In such a case the uniformity of nature, established by a firm and unalterable experience, would be balanced by the variable testimony of one of our five senses Is it a matter of fact that human testimony does at times deceive us? So do our senses So do our eyes, when we look upon the stars as luminous specks scattered all over the concave of the heavens, rather than as worlds immeasurably bigger than our own So do our eyes, when we look upon the phenomenon called the mirage as a fountain of clear water embowered amid a cluster of shady trees The testimony of our eyes is therefore as variable as human testimony, and must succumb to that invariable experience which establishes the uniformity of nature So that Hume's argument brings us to the absurd conclusion that we should not believe a miracle even if it were wrought under our own eyes !

But the humour of the thing has yet to be taken notice of Are you aware that Hume, after having worked out and blazoned his argument against miracles, himself abandons it? Hear his own words —“ I beg the limitations here may be remarked, when I say that a miracle can never be proved so as to be the foundation of a system of religion For I own that otherwise there may possibly be miracles, or violations of the usual course of nature, of such a kind as to admit of proof from human testimony Suppose all authors in all languages agree that from the 1st January, 1600, there was a total darkness over the whole world for eight days , suppose that the tradition of this extraordinary

event is still strong and lively among the people, that all travellers who return from foreign countries bring us account of the same tradition, without the least variation or contradiction, it is evident that our present philosophers, instead of doubting the fact, ought to receive it as certain "

Read this in connection with what he says regarding another miracle "But should this miracle be ascribed to any new system of religion, men in all ages have been so imposed upon by ridiculous stories of that kind, that the very circumstance would be full proof of a cheat, and sufficient, with all men of sense, not only to make them reject the fact, but to reject it without further examination " And so we are brought by a masterpiece of sophism to the paradoxical conclusion that a miracle admits of proof from testimony when it is aimless, but not susceptible of proof from testimony when wrought in attestation of a system of religion Hume objects to religion rather than to miracles

And this is generally the case with all opponents of miracles They oppose miracles, not because they are deviations from the uniformity of nature, but because they are the inevitable accompaniments or appendages of revealed religion If miracles could be detached from religion, and presented as scientific or historical facts, all opposition to them would most likely cease As a rule, those of our countrymen who most vehemently oppose even the barest mention of a miracle are living in the world without God and without religion

I wish I could properly paint the unutterable wretchedness of the man who lives without God in the world To live without God is to live without life and light, without hope and joy This life is a scene of toil and pain, of vicissitudes and reverses, an almost uninterrupted chain of trials and vexations, of sorrows and distresses In the midst, however, of its storms and tempests there is one resting-place, a rock of refuge, a habitation to which we may per-

petually repair This sure resting-place is God ! Separated from Him, we are in a state of absolute helplessness When called upon to face temptations too strong to be overcome by our feeble selves, there is no mighty deliverer to stand by and help us ! When treading, as tread we must some time or other in the journey of life, the dark path of misfortune, there is no friend to listen to our cries and come to our rescue ! In sickness and in pain there is no loving hand to smooth our pillows and cool our aching temples ! In the hour of death we are left to struggle through thick darkness, such as may be felt, without a ray of light to guide our footsteps and cheer our desponding hearts ! In life we are miserable, in death unutterably wretched, and in eternity undone

How different was the condition of him who in the plenitude of hope and joy exclaimed "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want He maketh me to lie down in green pastures He leadeth me beside still waters He restoreth my soul He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me "

III.

PROFESSOR TYNDALL ON MIRACLES.

THE two names blazoned by those of our countrymen who oppose miracles amid loud shouts of victory are David Hume and John Tyndall. The extravagant praises they bestow on Hume show that they are somewhat behind the age. Hume's celebrated argument against miracles is dead and gone, and an attempt to revive it is something like the task of digging out of the bowels of mother earth the fossil remains of the huge animals which flourished before the present order of things was introduced.

Hume's objection was doubtless a prodigiously big animal, a creature of enormous size and terrific proportions in the days of our great-grandfathers. But the mammoth had been killed and buried long before we were born! To dig its fossil remains out of the beds of the polemical literature in which it lies buried, and then to parade the petrified fragments as a living animal fitted by its appearance to frighten us out of the position we occupy—this is more likely to amuse than to injure the advocates of the supernatural. But we need not condemn our countrymen for resorting to this amusing trick, inasmuch as in this, as in almost every other attitude they assume in their controversy with the advocates of Christianity, they merely follow the example set by their betters.

The great champions of infidelity do nothing but reproduce Hume's worn-out, or rather oft-exploded argument, whenever the question of miracles is on the *tapis*. You remember what Emerson says regarding the great dramatists of England after Shakespeare. He says that they have only *Shakespeareised* or reproduced Shakespeare in some form or other. The modern opponents of the supernatural, excepting those of the Pantheistic School, have only *Humised*, or reproduced Hume in some form or other. This decided conviction on our part led us in our last lecture to give much prominence to an objection which, but for the pertinacity with which it is ever and anon disinterred, might and should have been left undisturbed in its grave. As Professor Tyndall simply reproduces Hume, our wisdom in making him the subject of a separate notice may be questioned. In his capacity as a man of science, as well as an opponent of Christianity, he is a follower rather than a leader. He has popularised the latest discoveries and results of science, but not extended its boundaries, and no new objection to Christianity is inseparably and exclusively identified with his name. Spinoza and Hume both started arguments which will ever be indissolubly connected with their names. Not so Professor Tyndall. He raises questions, however, which we cannot overlook in discussing the question of miracles, we make his objections, therefore, however threadbare, the theme of a separate discourse.

It must also be borne in mind that Professor Tyndall has not favoured the world with anything like a learned and elaborate disquisition on miracles—any treatise, like the celebrated Essay of David Hume, wherein his views may be found arranged with literary skill and logical precision. His thoughts on the subject lie scattered here and there in his somewhat rambling paper entitled "Miracles and Special Providences," and one in which he makes a feeble attempt

to hold up the great miracle of the sun standing, recorded in the book of Joshua, to public ridicule

The first is not an attack on miracles, but a flippant review of a standard work on miracles—viz, the celebrated Bampton Lectures of Mr Mozley. In this paper, though, like all his papers, exceedingly readable, we do in vain look for a connected, coherent statement of views, or for what may be called a natural development of one or certain definite lines of argumentation, a few sporadic hints casually and almost recklessly thrown out against miracles being all that we are favoured with

With these scattered hints, rather than with the merits of the controversy between the reviewer and his decidedly abler opponent, we have to do. But before noticing them, we wish to bring forward a few of the many instances of argumentative unfairness, of which the Professor stands guilty before us. These will show that in treating of religious questions, Tyndall is by no means true to those principles of induction, to which, except when parading his wild and fantastic theories, his homage is almost uniformly paid

Mr Mozley represents the spread and influence of Christianity as a grand and stupendous result of miracles. The Professor ridicules this assertion, and triumphantly affirms that Mohammedanism has proved the possibility of spreading a religion without miracles. The spread or influence of Mohammedanism is a phenomenon of the same description with the spread or influence of Christianity. Now if the phenomenon in the case of Mohammedanism does not need miracles to explain it, why may it not be explained in the case of Christianity without miracles?

This is the Professor's argument! We cannot help representing it as a miserable sophism entirely unworthy of a man of his scientific reputation. Nobody with a grain of common sense ever dreams of maintaining that a religion

cannot possibly be propagated except by miracles To hold such a preposterous position is tantamount to maintaining that all the religions of the world, both true and false, have been spread by means of miraculous interpositions of Divine power

There are several things which may be represented in scientific phraseology as the efficient causes of the spread and influence of a religion Mohammedanism has demonstrated with a vengeance the possibility of spreading a religion by the power of the sword Mohammed could scarcely number a score of disciples before persecution necessitated his escape to Medina Here he changed his character, became a soldier, organised an army, infused his own martial spirit into it, and led it forth to victory and renown His religion progressed simultaneously with his sword, or flourished in proportion as his plans of conquest became successful His creed was made predominant in Arabia in his lifetime, and elsewhere after his death, precisely in the manner in which the famous Political Propaganda of France subsequently endeavoured to make their democratic principles preponderant in Europe A grand army was organised and sent forward regularly to force republicanism on the acceptance of reluctant peoples living peacefully under their own political institutions on the continent of Europe Mohammed and his followers spread their religion mainly, if not solely, by the power of the sword

Again, Buddhism has shown the possibility of spreading a religion by what may be called a flexible, compromising, and assimilative spirit The spread of Buddhism was secured by the facility with which it intermingled and identified itself with the prevalent religions of the world It became in essentials, what the Apostle Paul subsequently became in non-essentials,—“all things to all men” In China it developed into a system of religious Sociology, in Thibet it became a sort of Thaumaturgy, and in some of

the barbarian islands it conquered, it was lost amid the impurities and horrors of the lowest types of fetishism. By abandoning its own principles, giving up its distinctive features, and assuming varieties of forms inconsistent with its spirit, Buddhism made itself predominant.

Again, a religion may be spread by the power and influence of a dominant aristocracy in conjunction with a powerful hierarchy, or, in simpler words, by statecraft in combination with priestcraft. Almost all the horry and consolidated heathenisms of the world were evidently spread in this manner. The spread of a religion is a phenomenon to the production of which several causes contribute, but it is not difficult to ascertain in a particular case that which may be called *the* efficient cause. The spread or influence of Christianity is a phenomenon which we have to explain on correct principles of logic.

A religion may be spread by the power of the sword, but the first propagators of Christianity were entirely destitute of this power. Nay, they had this power—the power of the sword—arrayed against them. A religion may be spread by an aristocratic and hierarchical influence, but the first preachers of Christianity had this influence arrayed against them, certainly not in their favour. A religion may be spread by a supple, yielding, and assimilative spirit, but Christianity manifested from the very beginning a firm and uncompromising principle, and declared a war of extermination against all the religions of the world.

These causes, therefore, could have nothing to do with the spread and influence of Christianity during at least the first and most glorious period of its promulgation, it therefore was spread by the only other cause to which such a phenomenon may be traced—the power of God exhibited in signs and wonders and mighty works!

The second instance of argumentative unfairness we have to present hinges on what the learned Professor says re-

garding the supposed unimportant character of Christ's works. He not merely insinuates, but plainly and emphatically affirms that, while Christ invariably appealed to His stupendous character as a proof of His Divinity, Satan suggested to Him the propriety of proving His Sonship by means of miracles, such as that of changing stone into bread.

The Professor gives us coolly to understand that when we insist on the miracles of Christ as proofs of His authority as a messenger of God, we follow the course pursued by Satan, rather than the course followed by Christ Himself. But the fact unhappily is that our Lord appealed oftener to His magnificent works than to His glorious, spotless character. He certainly did at times appeal to His superhuman excellence of character, and boldly challenged His adversaries to "convince Him of sin." But He appealed to His stupendous works more frequently and more systematically. "If," He said, "I had not done the works which no other man did, they had not had sin." "Believe me," He said, "for the work's sake." Professor Tyndall has found it convenient to overlook these appeals. What shall we say of the candour of a man who in reasoning avails himself only of those facts and truths which favour his preconceived theories, and coolly passes over those which may be marshalled against them?

Again, the Professor makes some facetious remarks on the miracle of the sun standing still on Gibeon and the moon in the valley of Ajalon. Supposing that the phenomenon was brought about by a miraculous interference, not with the motion of a globe, "fourteen hundred thousand times the earth in size," but with the motion of the earth, he carefully and minutely calculates the amount of power needed, and then contrasts the greatness of the miracle with the assumed smallness of the result ensured.

The destruction of Joshua's foes could evidently have been effected by an expenditure of energy almost infinitely

less than that involved in stopping the rotation of the earth on its own axis. Why, then, this vast and incalculable waste of power? Are we to look upon the miracle "as a practical means of vengeance," "or as purely evidential"? If a means of vengeance, why this lavish waste of power? If evidential, it was useless, "because the Israelites knew nothing of its amount."

A master of sophisms, the Professor coolly affirms that the Israelites could not possibly look upon this astounding event as a proof of Divine intervention in their behalf till they had ascertained the exact amount of power needed to realise it. The sky lowers, the lightning begins to flash, the thunder begins to roar, and a terrific storm rages with a violence such as seems likely to uproot and break to pieces the everlasting hills. A Thaumaturgist or miracle-worker appears, and rebukes the tempest into a calm. We should not look upon the phenomenon as a sign of superhuman power, because, forsooth, we do not know the exact amount of power needed to produce it.

A locomotive, with a train of heavy cars, shoots across a village at the rate of thirty miles an hour. The simple villagers step out of their cottages to enjoy the sight, praise its wonderful rapidity, and loudly represent it as a magnificent result of scientific invention. "Hold," the Professor says, "you are fools! you have no right to look upon it as a stupendous monument of human skill, because you do not know the amount of power it puts forth, or the occult forces in operation to bring about the phenomenon!"

One more instance of argumentative unfairness, and we shall have done with this portion of our discourse. The Professor loudly and fearlessly affirms, not merely insinuates, that scientific men—men whose knowledge of the sciences keeps pace with the age—can never be persuaded to believe in miracles, or in a religion which, like Christianity, is inseparably associated or intertwined with miracles.

No wonder that the learned Professor is of this opinion. He has a very handy way of accounting for faith when it is allied to eminent scientific attainments. In his admirable paper on Faraday he makes that eminent scientist the subject of a rich, glowing, but by no means extravagant and fulsome eulogy, and speaks of his discoveries in the region of science with unstinted praise. But when he comes to Faraday's unwavering faith in Christianity, or unswerving loyalty to Christ, he represents it as "hereditary," and therefore unreasonable!

Faraday was, in his opinion, an ingenious experimentalist and a sound reasoner in science, but in religion he followed a mere hereditary impulse, and was consequently a fool! And such reckless and unworthy imputations will be cast in our teeth, if we bring forward other names, as distinguished in the world of science as Faraday's, to prove the utter groundlessness of the assertion that scientific men cannot be induced to believe in miracles. We need not repeat that these and the other instances of flippancy and unfairness, which may be enlarged on, prove that Professor Tyndall is incapable of taking a calm and philosophical view of any theme connected with religion, and that his avowed antipathy to Christian orthodoxy manifests an obliquity of disposition, as well as a biased judgment and perverted reason.

Let me dispose of two points of minor importance before we refer to the important questions raised in Professor Tyndall's paper entitled, "Mercies and Special Providences."

The Professor's inveterate hostility to miracles is based on a cool assumption. "Nothing," he says, "has occurred to indicate that the operation of the law has for a moment been suspended." This is a gratuitous assumption, and reminds us of the string of groundless assertions which enter into the texture and animate the spirit of Hume's celebrated argument against miracles. The Professor evidently sees conjured

up, in a miraculous story, a grand contest between a firm and unalterable, and a variable experience

John Stuart Mill also sees the same phantom, and presents it in language much more imposing than Hume's. In his version of the defunct argument, we see a contest, not between two such commonplace things as an invariable and variable experience, but between "a complete induction" on one side and "an approximate generalisation" on the other. We cannot but feel deeply indebted to the great Logician and Philosopher for these two pompous and high-sounding phrases, but we respectfully submit that neither the cool assumption of Professor Tyndall nor the imposing phraseology of Mill adds a straw to the weight of the original argument against miracles.

Mill seems to acknowledge Hume's discomfiture when he represents that argument as fitted only to prove that, if a person does not believe in the existence of a God, or if a person believes that God cannot but work according to His laws, a miracle is not enough of itself to lead him to a recognition of a special Divine intervention.

The second of the eight able lectures criticised by Professor Tyndall embodies a masterly disquisition, the object of which is to show that experience cannot prove the permanence and inviolability of the order of nature. What is the origin of your belief in the constancy and uniformity of nature? Why do you believe that the course of nature will be to-morrow as it is to-day, and as it was yesterday? Why do you believe that the future will present phenomena like those you have noticed in the past and do notice in the present? Can this faith of yours be scientifically proved?

Young graduates of the Calcutta University publicly express their unwillingness to believe in anything which cannot be scientifically demonstrated. "Prove," they say, "the existence of God scientifically, and we will adopt this fun-

damental truth of all religion prove the existence of heaven and hell, the essential distinction between right and wrong, the turpitude of sin on principles of induction, and we will embrace these exploded doctrines of a theological age”

Whether these fundamental truths of religion can be scientifically proved is a question we need not raise at present, suffice it to say that these young heroes do believe in something which cannot be scientifically proved. They believe in the uniformity of nature, they cannot rear the majestic superstructure of science, or even carry on the ordinary business of life, without such faith. But why do they believe in the uniformity of nature? Does experience prove this uniformity? No, experience refers to the past, not to the future. Experience proves the past constancy of nature, but it cannot prove the future constancy of nature. But the invariable law of causality proves the uniformity of nature. “If the force be *permanent*,” says Professor Tyndall, “the phenomena are *necessary*, whether they resemble or do not resemble anything that has gone before”

Let us accept this representation of the matter, though it is very difficult for the Professor to prove the necessary connection between what he calls the force and the phenomena. The causal relationship between antecedents and consequents should certainly be assumed, but cannot possibly be demonstrated, hence the necessity he assumes cannot be proved. But granting the necessity and invariable nature of the connection between the force and the phenomena, who is to prove the *if*? Granting that if the force be permanent the phenomena will be permanent also, is the Professor able to prove its permanence? Is he sure that it will never be controlled, overpowered, and neutralised by a force infinitely more potent and plastic than itself? Is he sure that it has no creator, and consequently can have no destroyer? What guarantees can he furnish for the permanence of the force? The law of causality, therefore,

cannot prove the uniformity of nature, cannot exhibit the reasonableness of that expectation of likeness which is inherent in us

The truth is, our belief in the constancy of nature is instinctive and intuitive, and those persons who will not believe in any truth till it is scientifically proved ought to cast it overboard. Now, the selfsame instinct or impulse which leads us to believe in the uniformity of nature, irresistibly leads us to look back to the time when its framework had a beginning, and forward to the time when that framework will be destroyed. We believe, therefore, and believe instinctively, both in the constancy and the ultimate destructibility of nature !

The Professor meets Mr Mozley's assertion that experience cannot prove the order of nature with the counter-assertion that our belief in the impossibility of miracles being wrought by man without the aid of higher powers is also based on experience. We believe, for instance, that man cannot, unaided, raise the dead to life, because experience shows that man has not been able to do so up to date. We cannot but stigmatise this counter-proposition as ludicrously sophistical. Our belief in our inability to work miracles is based, not merely on experience, but on a thorough knowledge of ourselves. Our knowledge of ourselves is almost infinitely more extensive and thorough than the scientist's knowledge of nature, and this knowledge, more than general experience, brings us to the conclusion that miracles are impossible to man.

The scientist's knowledge of nature is confined to the phenomena of which he can take cognisance,—he knows absolutely nothing of the occult and unseen forces which operate behind the veil, whereas our knowledge of ourselves is by no means superficial, embracing as it does what is cognisable by consciousness as well as what is perceptible by the senses. But supposing we admit that our inability

to work miracles is only proved by experience, what does the Professor gain? Does experience prove that the present weakness of man is to be perpetuated for ever? No, experience does not any more prove the continuance of human weakness than it proves the permanence and inviolability of the order of nature

Every child knows that we Christians look forward to an indefinite development and expansion of our native powers and faculties. We do anticipate a time when it will be possible for us to work, with the help of our expanded powers, those very miracles before which, when wrought by superhuman energy, we stand wonderstruck and dazzled. And so in some future period there will very likely be atomic and molecular changes and revolutions in nature, such as will completely explode Dr Tyndall's cherished theories based on the established order of nature!

Now we come to the important questions appertaining to the controversy on miracles, which the learned Professor raises with an air of triumph, regarding them evidently as unanswerable. The first of these is dwelt on in the first part of his article on Mr Mozley's Bampton Lectures. It is—Is a miracle an invariable and indubitable sign of moral goodness? Suppose a miracle is wrought before you by a person, are you to look upon it as a reliable and indisputable proof of his excellency of character, and consequently of his Divine commission? The Professor elucidates the subject by adducing a couple of appropriate examples.

You are aware that, in accordance with Divine command, Moses tried to prove his authority as a messenger of God by a miracle wrought in the presence of Pharaoh. He cast his rod on the ground, and it became a serpent. Pharaoh, instead of being convinced, sent for the best magicians of Egypt, and commanded them to do as Moses had done. In obedience to the royal mandate they cast their rods on the ground, and these also became serpents. Moses' serpent

was, however, bigger than these, and it swallowed them up. The difference between his miracle and theirs was, as the Professor justly says, quantitative, not qualitative. The quality of the miracle in both the cases is the same, a lifeless rod converted into a living serpent. But the quantity varies—a big snake in the one case swallows up and annihilates the smaller snakes miraculously produced in the other. The difference being only quantitative, why should we look upon Moses as an ambassador of God and Jannes and Jambres as ambassadors of Satan?

In reply, we have no hesitation in saying that a miracle does not necessarily indicate moral goodness on the part of him who works it. It is like a victory in a fair fight, a proof of power, and nothing else. Power may in the case of miracles, as in the case of martial achievements, be associated with goodness or badness, moral rectitude or moral turpitude. Power, whether intellectual, moral, or physical,—power, whether human or superhuman, may be prostituted to improper uses, and when so abused it is a sign of moral delinquency rather than moral excellence.

In order to settle, in a particular case, whether the superhuman power shown is associated with moral goodness, we must examine the moral surroundings of the miracle, we must examine the character of the person by whom the miracle is worked, the circumstances under which it is wrought, and its moral tendencies or effects. Apply this crucial test to the miracles under review, and you will see how the same wonderful event can speak two different things in two different cases. Jannes and Jambres worked their miracles in obedience to the command of a despotic sovereign, not with a view to glorify God. They were evidently moved by interested motives, and their object was self-aggrandisement, an increase of their fame and wealth. The consequence of their stupendous works was to perpetuate the slavery of an oppressed and downtrodden

people, and stereotype their political and social degradation. Their miracles embodied, as it were, the unutterable malignity of hell, and bore the seal and signature of its sovereign, and they have therefore been uniformly looked upon as his emissaries.

On the other hand, Moses worked his miracle in obedience to a command of God, and with a single eye to His glory. His motives were pure and disinterested, inasmuch as he had preferred, in the well-known words of Scripture, the reproach of Christ to the treasures of Egypt. And the consequence of his stupendous works was the emancipation of a miserable and weeping people from the galling yoke of a degrading servitude. His entire work bears the seal and signature of Heaven, and he has justly been regarded as a messenger of God. The internal evidence of Christianity should not, in my humble opinion, be detached from the external, any more than the moral considerations clustering around a miracle should be separated from the physical phenomena associated with it.

But why, asks the Professor, do you see the power of God in the miracles of Christ? Might not Christ have "antedated the expanded powers of humanity," and done what, if we had His comprehensive knowledge of nature, we could easily do? Might not Christ and His Apostles know certain occult laws of nature of which we are ignorant? And might not the works by which they set the world on a gaze of admiration, be traced to their superior knowledge, rather than to anything like a Divine intervention in their favour? Why, then, see direct interpositions of Divine power in their stupendous works?

You are aware that John Stuart Mill dwells upon this point in his *Logic*, and that many young men in India base on it their unwillingness to regard the wonders wrought by Christ as miraculous interpositions of Divine power. These persons do not see how unlikely it was that Christ and His

Apostles should have an insight into the laws of nature deeper than that of which the foremost men in the scientific world in these days can boast

Christ and His Apostles lived in an age when science was not yet born, an age which, though emphatically a period of enlightenment and progress, was separated from the era of scientific progress by an interval of several hundred years. They were, moreover, men of no education, in the general acceptance of the term—that is, men who had not been brought up in schools of literature and philosophy. Was it likely that they should possess a knowledge of the occult laws of the physical world, more comprehensive and profounder than the champions of science in an age which is emphatically the age of science can boast of?

Again, these persons do not consider that if Christ and His Apostles had actually known certain laws of nature, such as enabled them to raise the dead, or still the tempest with a word, the knowledge would not have perished with them. They lived in a historical period, not in those dark, prehistoric times, when the pyramids of Egypt, for instance, were reared, and if they had been conversant with natural powers and forces such as enabled them to work wonders, their knowledge would most likely have been perpetuated, or would have been handed down to us through successive generations.

But the very existence of such laws is problematical. Had they existed, modern science would have enabled us to make some progress towards their discovery. But with the multiplied blessings of a developed science scattered broadcast around us, we are as far from so fortunate a discovery as the rudest of men in the rudest of ages in the history of the world were. To heal a man born blind with a word of command, is as impossible to our proud scientists, who glibly talk of those wonderful discoveries of theirs which have in their pompous language annihilated time and

distance, as to those naked savages whose only available tools are pieces of broken bones and sharp flints!

But we come back to the question—Why see the finger of God in the miracles of Christ? Why, because Christ distinctly says that His miracles are wrought by the power of God. Here, in settling this important question, we bring the spotless character of Christ and the beneficent tendencies of His moral teaching into the account.

Christ unequivocally and emphatically affirms that He works His miracles by the power of God. He enters into an argument, short but convincing, to prove that the stupendous works on which He bases His claim to be honoured as the promised Messiah, cannot possibly be traced to demoniac power and influence. He triumphantly points out the fact that the necessary tendency of His life and teaching is to destroy the kingdom of Satan, and that, therefore, He cannot but be opposed by the great enemy of souls. And while He sorrowfully, if not indignantly, repudiates the charge preferred against Him of complicity with the spirits of hell, He plainly, and without anything like a circumlocution, traces His miracles to the finger of God.

Now, are we to believe Christ, and look upon His works as manifestations of Divine power? or are we to believe Tyndall, and look upon them as harbingers of what mankind generally will be in a position to do when science will have entirely driven God out of His creation? To suppose that Christ, while availing Himself of His superior knowledge of the powers and forces of nature, was unscrupulous enough to represent His works as signs of Divine power, is to admit a miracle more astounding than any of those which it is intended to explain!

Though we admit that the moral considerations clustering around a miracle should on no account be thrown out of calculation, we cannot but point out some miracles of Christ,

as being of a nature fitted to lead us instinctively to recognise the finger of God in them

Take, for instance, the greatest miracle wrought by Christ, except His own resurrection. There dwelt in a quiet village, in the vicinity of Jerusalem, a well-to do and happy family, consisting very likely of a brother and two sisters. That house was emphatically a house of prayer, a temple of God, and therefore an abode of joy and peace, but sickness spread a cloud of sorrow over it. The brother fell sick, and the sorrowing sisters sent a message to their Friend and Lord Jesus Christ, beseeching Him to come and heal the sufferer. Jesus apparently disregarded the message, and the brother died, and was buried in the family sepulchre. The sisters sat disconsolate, and many sympathising friends gathered around and mourned with them.

Jesus appears on the scene, and one of the weeping sisters—she who was the more impulsive of the two—hastens to meet Him. She sees the Master, and accosts Him, almost mechanically and instinctively, with the words “Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” A short conversation ensues, and Jesus reveals that Divinity, which He would not always conceal, in words which have converted the gloomy chamber of death and the yawning graveside into scenes of joy and triumph. Mary is sent for. She comes, followed by the sympathising friends who would not leave her alone even for a moment. She also accosts Christ with the words of sweet and blessed trust addressed to Him by her more impulsive, but by no means more devoted, sister.

Then follows a scene of deep mourning. All hearts are melted, all eyes are bedewed with tears, and all voices are united in a general lamentation. Jesus weeps, and inquires where the deceased brother has been laid. The grave is shown, and as soon as the stone over its dark mouth is rolled away, a noisome, pestilential smell rises

from the partially putrefied body Jesus looks up, shows by a short prayer His subordination as man to God, and issues the command, "Lazarus, come forth!" And he that is dead, he that has been in the grave four days, comes forth, wrapped in his grave clothes

You cannot contemplate the mighty event, you cannot picture to yourself this scene of wonder, without being instinctively led to notice the finger of God in it. And if, instead of tracing it directly to the boundless power of the Almighty, we ascribe it to an inferior agency, or to what Dr Tyndall is pleased to call "the expanded powers of humanity," we insult the instincts of man, outrage his common sense, and sin against the Holy Ghost. We call down on our own heads the sharp reproof, which Christ sorrowfully administered to those who were led, more by an obliquity of disposition than by an error of the head, to attribute His stupendous miracles to demoniac influence and power.

Professor Tyndall's creed is materialistic pantheism, and, as he boldly brings creation, with all its wonders, its physical organisation, intellectual activity and moral life, out of what he is pleased to call "a primordial germ," his tendency to laugh at miracles is not a matter of surprise. According to his favourite theory, all of you are things, not men—things carried to and fro by the physical laws in operation in the realm of nature, not men acting in consequence of that self-impulsion which is the basis of your accountability as well as of your greatness.

According to Professor Tyndall and his brother theorists, you are parts of the machinery of nature, and your movements are irresistibly guided by the law of causality. Your good deeds are the result, not of commendable choice on your part, but of some wheels in motion in the wonderful framework of the physical world, and your vices, being necessitated as decidedly as the spiral motion of the innumerable particles flung up by a whirlwind, are as little

censurable as your virtues and excellences The genius of Shakespeare, the philanthropy of Howard, and the military enthusiasm of Napoleon, are all things of the earth, earthy, springing from some movement or other in the machinery of nature, and guided in their development by nothing higher than the invariable sequence of cause and effect You are things, and your sovereign and guide is gravitation !

How different is your position declared to be in the Bible ! You are men free to choose between obedience and disobedience, and therefore responsible for your thoughts, words, and deeds You are sovereigns within your spheres of action , you are first causes, and you set trains of causation in motion when you act. And the possibilities before you are glorious indeed , you can become by an act of faith children of God and heirs of glory, partakers of the nature, majesty, and the unspeakable happiness of God ! You are gods, not things , and your end is complete union with God, not ceaseless transmutation—the inevitable fate of atoms and molecules !

IV.

THE PLACE OF MIRACLES IN CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE.

IN the interesting discussions elicited by the Lectures already delivered, we have casually referred to the harmony subsisting between true science and true religion. There is a science which is falsely so called, a science which is a tissue, not of demonstrated truths and facts, but of fantastic theories and wild speculations, and there is a religion which does not deserve the name, a religion which is the quintessence of bigotry and fanaticism.

These two monstrous systems—false science and false religion—are of course antagonistic to each other, and their perpetual, ceaseless warfare has, to some extent, blinded the eyes of the public to the beautiful harmony which subsists between the volume of nature and the volume of revelation. The points of resemblance between the Word of God and His work are many, and may be expanded into an acceptable, rich, and instructive discourse. We have at present, however, to do with only one of them. The Bible resembles the book of nature in its adaptability to men of different temperaments, diverse tastes, and varied gifts.

The great book of nature is emphatically the property of all mankind, not the monopoly of a favoured few. Its different chapters are suited to different classes of individuals. Men of a scientific turn of mind may find in the

wonders scattered around us, the wonders concealed in rocky beds beneath our feet, as well as those which are displayed in rich abundance over our heads, a vast, illimitable field for study and research. The philosopher finds in the occult forces in operation in the domain of nature, as well as in the precious gems of truth which sparkle in the recesses of the human mind and the human heart, enough, yea, more than enough, to stimulate and enrich his inquisitive spirit and calm intellect. The poet has his imagination fired and his delicate sensibilities exhilarated by the beauties of the vegetable creation, the glories of the starry sphere, and the grandeur and sublimity associated with the snow-capped, forest-clad mountain, and the wild, thundering sea. And even the ordinary student, the dull observer, who is not at home among the mysteries of science, the problems of philosophy, and the charms of poetry, may find in the common-place truths and facts of nature enough to invigorate his mind and expand his feelings.

In short, men of diverse dispositions and tastes, men of transcendent abilities and contemptible powers, men with or without a lofty mind, a penetrating intellect, or a soaring genius, men with or without a fine sense of the sublime or the beautiful,—in a word, all mankind, from those who lead, down to those who are led on in the path of observation and thought, are sure to reap a harvest of objective knowledge and subjective pleasure from the great book of nature. And while the mightiest intellect cannot go beyond comprehending a few of the innumerable mysteries enshrined in its pages, its broad teachings and general truths are level to the comprehension of minds of the smallest calibre.

Now what is true of the book of creation is also true of the Book of Revelation. The Bible, like nature, is suited to men of different temperaments, diverse tastes, and varied abilities. Its treasures are marvellously varied. John Bright is perfectly correct when he says that the Bible is

not a book, but a library of books. It embodies all sorts of useful knowledge, all kinds of profitable thought, and all styles of composition. It consists of historical dissertations, genealogical tables, chronological figures, poetical effusions, lyrical songs, prophetic visions, didactic discourses, doctrinal disquisitions, allegories, parables, aphorisms and apophthegms.

The variety of reading presented in this wonderful volume is only equalled by the variety of sights presented in the domain of nature. The antiquarian may find, in the inexhaustible mine of antiquities opened up in its pages, innumerable subjects worthy of his laborious study and patient research. The general student of history may have his tastes refined, and his moderately inquisitive spirit gratified, by narratives which in fidelity, variety, and picturesque beauty are unmatched. The philologist may note the successive stages of development through which one at least of those languages which come under the head of Oriental classics passed, before it was changed from a crude embodiment of the simplest ideas into a polished vehicle of the niceties and shades of philosophic thought.

The poet loses himself in a labyrinth of songs as pure, as sweet, and as sublime as the songs of the flowers in the field and the melodies of the stars in the skies, and the philosopher is brought into contact with a range of subjects more recondite and inscrutable than any presented by human science. And while the profoundest intellects find it absolutely impossible to dive into the unfathomable abyss of mystery found in the Book of Books, its cardinal doctrines and general principles are intelligible to all mankind.

The evidences of Christianity also present that diversity of character which we see and admire in the volume of Revelation as well as in the works of nature. They form a colossal body of literature, and are fitted to convince men

of different temperaments, diverse tastes, and varied powers. The scientific man may find in the wonderful harmony subsisting between the truths and laws discovered by science and those embodied in revelation, a strong argument in favour of Christianity. The philosopher has a convincing proof of its Divine origin in its adaptability to, or power to satisfy the deepest wants, the greatest necessities, and the noblest yearnings of the human soul.

The harmonist may find in the fact that the Bible, though written by about fifty different authors, living in different places at different times, and under an almost infinite variety of circumstances, though presenting a range of literature as varied and multiform as that presented by an ordinary library, is a perfect organism or unity, a strong argument in favour of the religion it teaches. The moralist may find an evidence in its favour in the acknowledged superiority of its beautiful and benevolent system of morality over every other ethical system known or heard of in the world.

The acute reasoner may find in the reasonableness, originality, and grandeur of its philosophy a marvellous proof of its Divine origin. The poet may see the hand of God in the beauty of its spirit, the purity of its teachings, and the sublimity of its doctrines. The historian may find in its magnificent array of prophecies and miracles enough to convince him of its Divine origin and glorious truth. And the ordinary reader may see the stamp of God indelibly impressed on a variety of truths which we instinctively recognise as Divine, and a variety of beauties over which we love to linger as we study the wonderful pages of the Bible.

Add to this many-sided argument that based on the unique character of Christ—an argument which, apart from all others, is fitted to convince all classes and orders of society—and that based on the early progress and the present ascendancy of His holy religion, and you have a mass of

evidence really prodigious before you—a mass of evidence which, but for the acknowledged obliquity of the human heart, would in all cases be invariably accompanied with the conviction it is so eminently fitted to generate in the human mind

Now the question we have to settle in this discourse is, What place do miracles occupy in this vast mass of evidence? Do they occupy a prominent or merely a subordinate place? To make the matter clear and intelligible, let me put the question in another form. The vast mass of evidence, which we have feebly attempted to indicate, clusters around either the *facts* or the *doctrines* of Christianity, and the question to be solved is whether the facts are to be proved by an appeal to the doctrines, or the doctrines are to be proved by an appeal to the facts. Which of the two branches of evidence—the branch proving the facts, or that proving the doctrines—enjoys the precedence? or which of these lines of proofs ought to be first presented to the inquiring mind?

This question, and all that may be said to extricate it from the difficulties with which it is encumbered, may be represented as perfectly unnecessary. The question, however, whether necessary or unnecessary, has divided the apologists of Christianity, or those numerous able reasoners who have written admirable treatises on its evidences, into two hostile camps. Some have stoutly maintained that the branch proving the facts by historical evidence should be allowed the foremost place in Christian controversy, while the other, the branch proving the doctrines by rational and intuitional evidence, ought to be thrown into the background. Others again as stoutly maintain that the foreground ought to be occupied by the branch which proves the doctrines rather than by that which proves the facts.

The advocates of the superiority of external evidence

maintain that, with our hearts vitiated by sin and our minds warped by prejudice, we are scarcely in a position to sit in judgment on the doctrines till a favourable impression is left on the mind by the facts. They also maintain that our ability to judge of the doctrines implies an amount of knowledge such as tends to preclude the necessity of a Divine revelation.

The advocates of the superiority of internal evidence triumphantly affirm, on the other hand, that even genuine miracles and prophecies cannot accredit doctrines which contradict reason and the moral sense, and that, though unable to discover religious truths, we are in a position to see their fitness and excellence when they are discovered. All this will convince you that a hot controversy has raged in the Church as to the relative position of these two kinds of evidence, and as I wish to present within a short compass the varied features of the argument based on miracles I cannot ignore it.

The controversy, however, may justly be represented as unnecessary and useless. The disputants, who have brought into the arena a large amount of argumentative power and logical acumen, have overlooked two important facts. In the first place, they have overlooked the fact that, as men are differently constituted and educated, different kinds of proof are demanded by what may be called the facts of the case.

There are minds of a profound, philosophic cast, and these can at once see the Divine origin of the doctrines of Christianity in their reasonableness and sublimity, their adaptability to human wants, and their obvious fitness to promote human happiness. It may not be necessary for persons endowed with such lofty minds to ascend, so to speak, from the astounding character of the miracles to the glorious nature of the doctrines. On the contrary, they may see the reasonableness and truth of the miracles

through what may be called the splendid eye glass of the doctrines

There are, again, minds of a popular stamp, minds not accustomed to close thinking and accurate reasoning, minds not intended to expatiate at large around the pinnacle of transcendental thought, and to these the palpable facts of Christianity must be a stepping stone to its sublime doctrines. They cannot be expected to see instinctively the truth of Christianity in the beauty, symmetry, and grandeur of the system of doctrinal philosophy it presents. But though incapable of instinctively recognising the Divinity concealed in the words of Christ, they are capable of noticing the superhuman power exhibited in His stupendous works. And from a recognition of Divine power in the miracles they mount up, by a natural ascent, to a recognition of Divine wisdom in the doctrines.

The disputants overlook, in the second place, the fact that the two branches of evidence, which have divided them into two hostile parties, are as inseparable as the facts and doctrines on which they are respectively based. The doctrines of Christianity are intertwined with its facts as the warp and the woof, and an attempt to separate them cannot but result in a miserable rent. In this respect Christianity occupies a position different from the religions of the world—a position unique of its kind. The doctrines of Mohammedanism may, for instance, be easily separated from the facts of Mohammed's life. The cardinal doctrines of Mohammedanism, viz., there is one God, He alone ought to be worshipped, virtue ought to be practised, and vice avoided, etc., have nothing whatever to do with the life and character of its great founder.

But the fundamental doctrine of Christianity, the doctrine of the atonement, falls to the ground as soon as the fact of Christ's crucifixion is disproved. The doctrines of the resurrection of the body and the perpetual intercession of

Christ,—doctrines which occupy a prominent place among the cardinal doctrines of Christianity,—are necessarily exploded as soon as the facts of Christ's resurrection and ascension are disproved. The facts of Christianity cannot be separated from its doctrines, neither can the branch of evidence which proves the facts be separated from that which proves the doctrines. They who separate these two lines of proof disunite what God has united.

The relative position of these two branches of evidence has undergone something like a revolutionary change since the days of our Lord. Then the miracles made a deeper impression than the doctrines. Christ appealed to His works oftener than to His teaching, and the Apostles in their public discourses only followed the example set by their Lord and Master. And those who, like Nicodemus, were ready to recognise His mission as a Teacher sent by God, expressly traced their conviction or faith to the stupendous miracles He wrought, rather than to the sublime and glorious doctrines He inculcated.

The reason is obvious. Excepting the fact that the miracles were fresh, and had not to be substantiated by a stream of testimony running down through ages and generations, the degree of intelligence prevalent fell short of what is necessary to a proper appreciation of the excellence of the doctrines. The people by whom our Lord was surrounded could understand and prize His visible and tangible works; but they were too dull to comprehend and appreciate the grandeur of His teachings.

Some amount of culture, such as tends to refine and polish not only our intellectual powers, but our moral perceptions, is needed to enable us to see unmistakable marks of Divinity in the doctrines and precepts of Christianity, just as some amount of mathematical knowledge is needed to enable us to estimate rightly the admirable and glorious achievements of Sir Isaac Newton in the science of mathematics. And

this amount of culture was rare, if not entirely wanting, among the peoples with whom Christ and the first preachers of the Gospel had to do, and consequently miracles could not but enjoy in their day a prominence of position, of which writers on evidence in these days fail to see the propriety

But the glorious truths of Christianity have been at work in a large portion of the world for more than eighteen hundred years, and that amount of religious knowledge which was almost wanting in the days of our Lord is becoming common in our days. And so the excellency of the doctrines of Christianity, which failed to make much impression then, is instinctively seen and admired now. There are minds in Christian lands, so well tutored and trained, that the borrowed light shed on the teachings of Christianity by the miracles associated with it, is to them nothing compared to their inherent, native lustre. And consequently in these favoured times, in some quarters at least, the doctrines of our religion naturally take the precedence of its facts. Christianity has so completely revolutionised human thought that each of these two branches of evidence occupies in these days a position the very antipodes of that which it occupied in the times of our Lord.

It must, however, at the same time be admitted that the masses, even in Christian countries, though far superior in moral culture to the peoples with whom the first preachers of the cross had to deal, are not enlightened enough to see instinctively the truth, beauty, and sublimity of the doctrines of Christianity. The branch of Christian evidence based on its extraordinary facts, has not become antiquated and useless, even in Christian countries. The majority in these favoured lands are intellectually so dull, that the facts must precede the doctrines, the external must be made a stepping-stone to the internal, before their minds can see the reasonableness of the faith which they inherit.

And if such is the case with the green tree, what must it be with the dry ? If the argument based on miracles must needs enjoy a pre eminence even in Christian lands, how high must its position be in non Christian countries ! In these countries the external evidence in favour of Christianity, with its two branches of miracles and prophecies, must be, cannot but be invested with something like a paramount importance That evidence must be first presented in all its convincing power, and the favourable impression it leaves upon the mind must be the medium through which the doctrines are to be introduced

To dilate on the grandeur of the doctrines amongst peoples who are not fitted by moral education to appreciate them, or to produce conviction through the instrumentality of truths, the symmetry and beauty of which are not recognised, is a hopeless task To see the truth of this assertion, you have only to observe the state of moral education around us. The moral perceptions of our countrymen are so decidedly blunted, that it is almost impossible for an educated man to prove to their satisfaction the erroneousness of their favourite maxim, that "the mighty cannot be blamed for sin" That God is at liberty to commit sin because He is mighty, appears so absurd and detestable to men whose moral sense has been brought back to something like its normal condition, that they may at first sight consider it impossible for a human being to entertain this monstrous notion even for a moment. It is only an overwhelming mass of evidence that can lead such persons to believe that man has gone down so low in the scale of moral education as to think it possible for God to be the author of sin

The maxim, however, that God's power covers a multitude of sins on His own part appears differently to our countrymen They look upon it as so natural and reasonable that an attempt to call its propriety in question is looked upon

by them as a sure token of madness. How little likely are such people to appreciate the purity and sublimity of the doctrines of Christianity! They know almost nothing of the wants these doctrines are fitted to satisfy, nothing of that unutterable holiness of God from which they derive what may be called their colour and complexion, nothing of that excellence of character which they are so eminently fitted to develop and mature.

They are, therefore, no more in a position to see instinctively their Divine origin than a person ignorant of the elements of geometry and algebra is in a position to test the accuracy of a process in differential calculus. To them, therefore, as well as to the masses in Christian lands, the external evidence, with its prophetic visions and utterances, and miraculous interpositions, must be first presented. Such would be, and should be, our course if human means were the only means of which we could avail ourselves. The influences of the Holy Ghost, however, alter the facts of the case. When the Spirit works within the soul, or pours its vivifying light into the recesses of the heart, the reasonableness and sublimity of the doctrines of Christianity are instinctively noticed, and external evidence with its historic reminiscences is not needed to produce conviction.

How very slow the world has been to appreciate moral evidence may be shown by a simple reference to the neglect to which the irresistible proof in favour of Christianity, based on the unique character of our Lord, was, until lately, consigned. The perfect sinlessness of Christ, together with the broad excellencies of His character, has of course been recognised, admired, and extolled in the Church since the very dawn of its glorious history, and a portion of the evidence in favour of Christianity has always been made dependent upon it. But the unutterable glory of that character, and its fitness to be set forth as one of

the main pillars of Christian evidence, have scarcely been recognised and made use of as they should have been

The harmonious combination of diverse and even opposite excellencies in the character of Christ, its beauteous and symmetrical development manifested through a variety of aspects, its unspeakable loftiness and grandeur, its unsullied purity and glorious completeness—in a word, the perfect ideal of morality and virtue realised in Christ, is, properly speaking, now being made the basis or groundwork of a powerful and irresistible argument in favour of His religion

The Christian world has taken eighteen hundred years to notice and appreciate the varied excellencies of the character of Christ, so as to be able fearlessly and confidently to appeal to its spotless purity and glorious perfection as indubitable proofs of the propriety and reasonableness of His extraordinary claims, and the unexceptionable soundness of His moral and theological teaching

Thus slowly, but surely, has the glory of the internal evidence of Christianity unfolded itself or burst upon the Christian world. While the evidence based on Christian miracles continues to-day what it was in the days of our Lord, or has become perhaps a trifle weaker, owing to that distance of time which has completely destroyed their freshness, that based on His moral and doctrinal teaching has become brighter and brighter, more and more convincing, as age after age has passed away. And this branch of evidence will grow in impressiveness and convincing power as the Christian world advances in its insight into what may be called the Divine image stamped on the life and teaching of Christ

The Christian world may in the days of our grandchildren be as far in advance of us in its knowledge and recognition of the beauty and symmetry of the one, and the reasonable-

ness and the sublimity of the other, as we are in advance of those who lived in the days of our grandfathers

A few additional remarks will make manifest the necessity of our presenting the historical evidence in favour of Christianity first, or before dwelling on the marks of Divinity impressed on its doctrines and precepts

Christianity is first a system of facts, and then a system of doctrines. Its doctrines, which, like all doctrines, are of a spiritual and therefore intangible character, are grouped around and inferred from its hard, stubborn, palpable facts. Human interpretations of these facts, together with the grand systems of theology based on them, have undergone changes, sometimes of a revolutionary nature, and a general alteration of the forms of expression in which the creed of Christendom is couched, is demanded by what is called the spirit of the age.

But the mutations and revolutions through which the formularies embodying the doctrinal belief of the Church have passed, have of course left the broad facts themselves not only unaffected, but positively intact. These, therefore, have to be first proved, and there is no possibility of proving them except in the only way in which all historical facts are proved—that is, by historical evidence.

It is the fashion in some quarters to depreciate this species of evidence, and represent it as unworthy of being associated with so sublime a reality as religion. But whether worthy of the high value set upon it by some of the apologists of Christianity or not, one thing is certain—our religion, having a series of historical facts for its basis, cannot be satisfactorily proved except by historical evidence.

And it is instructive to note that those who speak contemptuously of historical evidence when arrayed in favour of the everlasting truths of religion, cast overboard what is properly, though somewhat quaintly, called a historical Christianity. They convert its glorious facts into beautiful

fictions, they represent God as the Soul of the universe, Christ as the Ideal of Humanity, the Incarnation as the Union of the two Natures, the Higher and the Lower, in man, and the Atonement as nothing more than the subjugation of the lower by a process which involves pain and suffering¹ They spiritualize Christianity till it becomes absolutely nothing, a religion of fictions—fictions both historical and doctrinal¹ The facts of Christianity take in the volume of inspiration a precedence of its doctrines, and the branch which proves the facts ought therefore to take the precedence of that which proves the doctrines

Again, some of the doctrines of Christianity are above the comprehension of men, and cannot therefore be proved by what is called rational or intuitional evidence The doctrines of our holy religion may be classed under two heads, those which are natural, and therefore reasonable at first sight, and those which are supernatural, and therefore above the sphere of rational evidence or intuitive cognitions The doctrines that God is light, and that we ought to do to others as we would be done by, are doctrines of natural religion reproduced in the Bible, and they at first sight commend themselves as consonant with reason, and therefore worthy of acceptance.

But such doctrines as are implied in the two fold nature of Christ, His vicarious sacrifice, and the irrevocable doom pronounced against those who persist in impenitence—the doctrines, in theological parlance, of the Incarnation, the Atonement, and eternal punishment, are inscrutable mysteries, and it is entirely beyond our power to see their congruity or reasonableness

These doctrines have always been, and are, stumbling-blocks in the way of rationalising unbelievers, and human knowledge cannot show their accordance with reason in a manner forcible enough to challenge faith Their coincidence with the broad facts of God's moral government,

together with their harmony with the deep yearnings of the human soul, as they are embodied and illustrated in the religions of the world, may certainly be set forth, but their inherent fitness or congruity cannot be displayed so as to render unbelief both irrational and culpable. They are supernatural doctrines, as Mr Mozley says, and must be attested by supernatural works, they must be proved, not by their inherent brightness, but by the light thrown on them by the stupendous works with which they are associated. The importance of external evidence, therefore, is set forth in the veil of mystery in which the peculiar doctrines of Christianity are enshrouded.

The moral evidence, moreover, is inseparably associated with the experimental, inasmuch that the glorious fitness of the Christian doctrines can be fully comprehended only by those who reduce them to practice. However distinguished a man may be by natural talents and scholastic attainments, if he makes these doctrines the property of his mind without giving them a place in his heart,—that is, if he does not bring them down from the region of theory to the region of practice, he is sure to fail in his attempt to form an adequate idea of their necessity, suitability, reasonableness and beauty. The natural man perceiveth not the things of God, they are foolishness unto him.

Take, for instance, the doctrine of Justification by Faith alone, the animating principle of the great Lutheran movement of the sixteenth century. The natural man does not see the glorious fitness of this doctrine at all, and even the spiritual man comprehends it only after a series of hard struggles and fruitless attempts. It is when repeatedly foiled in his attempts to please God by rectifying his mind and heart, or regulating his thoughts and feelings, that he sees clearly that if he is to live at all, that is, live a life of conscious union with God resulting in durable joy and constant hope, he must live by faith.

He who reduces the glorious doctrines of Christianity to practice is the man who, according to a well-known saying of our Lord, sees clearly that they are from God. As, therefore, experience is needed to enable us to appreciate the moral evidence of Christianity in all its fulness and grandeur, to ask a person to embrace it on the strength solely of this species of proof, is tantamount to asking him to adopt and practise a religion before he is thoroughly convinced of its truth.

On the whole, therefore, the external evidence, or that which proves the facts with which the scheme of doctrines revealed in Holy Writ is inseparably associated, appears to be that which ought to be first presented to the inquiring mind. I am, however, willing to admit that its precedence is only a precedence of order, not one of merit, a precedence, so to speak, of time, not one of rank. I do not for a moment maintain that, because the external evidence ought in these days, as in the days of our Lord, to be first presented, it is the best and most satisfactory of all the kinds of evidence available for the defence and confirmation of our faith.

In sterling worth, as well as in convincing power, in impressiveness, sublimity, and spiritual significance, it is left in the shade by the species of evidence called experimental, the species of evidence without which the intensity of faith needed to bring us into a state of close union with God is an impossibility. It nevertheless takes the precedence of all other kinds of evidence in what may be called the order of presentation.

It is the magnificent gateway that ushers you into the Temple of Evidence. As you step in you stand wonder-struck before the varied forms of architectural grandeur, the fantastic carvings, the elaborate decorations, and the luminous arabesques which meet your eyes on every side, and you are perhaps tempted to conclude that the yet unseen

interior cannot possibly surpass in richness of ornament the glorious exterior you are gazing upon. But you advance, and before you fairly occupy a central position under the superb dome which crowns the edifice, glories burst on your eyesight from every nook and corner of the splendid hall, such as are calculated to eclipse those already seen and admired.

Setting aside tropes and metaphors, let me call your attention to the fact that Christian evidence is *cumulative*—not the elaboration of one solitary train of reasoning, but the union or joint force of several converging lines of proof. And if these are presented one after another, in due order, their united effect cannot but be irresistible.

One of the two branches into which the External or Historical evidence in favour of Christianity branches out, is that which proves the truth of the stupendous series of miracles associated with it—the miracles, in particular, recorded in the New Testament. To the question of the credibility of these, rather than to the general question of the nature and possibility of miracles, I must now confine your attention.

My plan is of the simplest kind, and may be developed in few words. I shall, in a couple of lectures, present both the external and internal evidence in favour of the genuineness, authenticity, and integrity of the New Testament scriptures in general, and the historical or biographical records in particular. I shall then direct your attention to the number, variety, and prominent characteristics of the miracles ascribed to Christ, as unmistakable signs or incontestable proofs of their genuineness. I shall then dwell upon the various indubitable marks of veracity stamped upon the records of the New Testament, and the proofs of sincerity given by the original witnesses in their altered life and conduct, as well as in the sufferings they voluntarily

underwent in consequence of their belief in the miraculous facts they preached

This done, I shall present corroborative evidence, or the additional testimony of subsequent witnesses in corroboration of that borne under exceedingly trying circumstances by the original witnesses I shall then take into consideration what may be called the additional light thrown on the Christian miracles by the supernatural life of Christ, and the rapid spread and present ascendancy of His religion Then I shall state and refute the various theories, by means of which modern infidels, such as Paulus, Strauss, Rénan, and Baur, have endeavoured to neutralise the significance of the facts associated with Christianity

And, finally, I shall conclude with a Lecture on the Resurrection of Christ, and one on the conversion of Paul, taking notice in each of modern theories and modern objections So you see the field before me is vast and varied, but before I enter, with my loins girt and my light burning, I must offer an observation or two on what is called the evidential value of miracles

A moot point, to which attention was called in my last Lecture, demands a few additional remarks Suppose miracles are wrought in favour of doctrines apparently absurd and mischievous, are we to accept the latter on account of the former? A great deal has been made of this question, specially by infidel writers, but the hypothesis on which it turns is at first sight untenable The definition of miracles ordinarily given precludes the possibility of miracles being wrought in favour of doctrines which are impure in their nature and degrading in their tendencies

A miracle is not merely an extraordinary work, or one which it is beyond the power of man to accomplish, but a work which unmistakably shows the finger of God in its performance If, however, we lower the definition of miracles, and confound them with wonders, prodigies, and marvels,

which, though not effected by Divine power, are yet beyond the range of human efforts, the supposition may be entertained and the question legitimately put. Nor have we far to go in quest of a reply. Christ, when accused of collusion with the spirits of hell, or of working miracles with the help of Beelzebub, the prince of devils, uttered the memorable words, "A house divided against itself cannot stand!" If the avowed and real object of a number of stupendous works is the destruction of the kingdom of God and the establishment of that of Satan, they cannot be from God; whereas if that object is the destruction of the kingdom of Satan and the advancement of that of God, they cannot but be looked upon as vestiges, not merely of superhuman, but of Divine power.

Miracles therefore should not be examined apart from the doctrines which they are intended to attest. The evidential value of miracles admits of limitations. As a rule they indicate interpositions of Divine power, but under exceptional circumstances they may speak a different language. They are in this respect something like the memory or the conscience, which, under exceptional circumstances, deceive us, and the reliability of which therefore admits of limitations.

A word on the question—What do miracles prove? Now confining our attention to the miracles of Christ, we affirm that if these are authenticated by reliable historical evidence, they prove, first, that He was a messenger sent by God, and, secondly, that we are bound to accept what He said concerning Himself and the grand object of His mission. In plainer terms, the miracles of Christ lead us to accept Him as our Heaven-appointed Teacher, and His teaching as Divine. This was the amount of conviction which these stupendous events did actually produce in the days of our Lord. You will remember the well-known saying of Nicodemus, the ruler of the Jews, who came to Jesus by night,

evidently to conceal himself from the obloquy to which a more public profession of faith on his part would have exposed him "Rabbi, we know that Thou art a Teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him"

If, in the lectures yet to be given, we succeed in proving that miracles of the most astounding and significant character—not merely a series of marvels either resolvable into tricks of legerdemain or performances of creative power of a superhuman stamp—were wrought by the Lord Jesus Christ, it will be your bounden duty—regard being had to every legitimate principle of sound reasoning—to hail Him as a Teacher sent by God, and to accept as truth whatever He says regarding Himself, and the terms on which alone God is willing to extend the blessings of salvation to you

The miracles of Christianity challenge our unquestioning faith in the Divine mission of its great Author, and in the doctrines He taught The peculiar or supernatural doctrines of Christianity are associated with its miraculous story by that sort of coincidence which implies design, not merely by that which presupposes a fortuitous concurrence of circumstances, an accident, not an original purpose

We live in an age of sentimentalism as well as in an age of science How two such dissimilar things as morbid sentimentalism and healthy science co-exist and flourish side by side with each other I cannot explain, any more than I can explain how theories of the most monstrous kind luxuriate alongside of sober facts and modest truths The fact, though perhaps inexplicable, is indisputable, that there is a larger amount of sickly sentimentalism in these days than we can come across in any one of the bygone ages of history

Some one has recently referred to the hero worship of the age, and said that in some quarters John Tyndall

is a higher object of adoration than the Lord Jesus Christ. This hero-worship is only an offshoot of maudlin sentimentalism, and is not worth much. Among the worshippers of Christ there are millions of men, millions of delicate women, I had almost said millions of tender children, who would gladly pour out their life-blood, mount the scaffold, or plunge themselves alive into the blaze of the funeral pyre, for the sake of their loving Redeemer, while among the devotees of John Tyndall there is not a man fool enough to have one of his little fingers cut for the sake of the eminent scientist they adore.

The difference between sentimental hero-worship and genuine devotion, such as has always been consecrated to Christ by a large portion of the population of the globe, was noticed by Napoleon, when his memorable fall directed his thoughts to objects of ambition higher than those which had formerly engrossed his attention. The prevailing sentimentalism of the age has led many eminent thinkers to depreciate the evidences of Christianity, and to speak of them with contempt.

Let me call your attention to the well-known remark of Coleridge "Evidences of Christianity! I am weary of the word! Make a man feel the want of it, and you may safely trust to its own evidence." Now this remark savours of morbid sentimentalism rather than of sober sense or sound philosophy. How can we possibly make the world "feel the want of" Christianity without the prior presentation of its facts and truths? And how can we make the world see that its facts are facts, and not fictions, and that its truths are truths, and not falsehoods in the garb of truths, without proper evidence?

There is a species of Christianity, a diluted Christianity, which the world may accept without evidence. I have on my table a book, Greg's *Creed of Christendom*, which

presents Christianity shorn of its supernatural elements, and therefore as decidedly acceptable at first sight as the system of religion called naturalism. What a havoc the author makes of the creed of Christendom! The Pentateuch is a collection of fables and legends, the Jewish prophets are historians and poets, not inspired writers and seers, the Apostles are not reliable expounders of the views of their Lord, Christianity is but Judaism sublimated and refined. Christ held erroneous views respecting demoniacal possession, the interpretation of Scripture, His own Messiahship, His second coming, and the approaching end of the world!

Christianity thus divested of everything which transcends reason, or apparently contradicts it, may be propagated without what may be called a flourish or parade of evidences. But Christianity as presented in the New Testament—Christianity with its scheme of supernatural doctrines attested by supernatural facts—Christianity with its incomprehensible truths, appalling paradoxes, and inscrutable mysteries, cannot be pressed on the acceptance of sinful, and therefore misguided, human beings without evidence cogent and convincing enough to prove its Divine origin.

V.

THE GENUINENESS, AUTHENTICITY, AND INTEGRITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

EXTERNAL EVIDENCE

You are thoroughly conversant with the line of argumentation brought forward by Professor Max Muller to prove the great antiquity of the Rig Veda. About six hundred years before the birth of Christ, when the brilliant era of Indian Philosophy dawned, certain statistical treatises were written, in which the exact number of verses, words, and syllables found in the Rig Veda is given.

We find that the book in question does contain the number of verses, words, and syllables indicated in these treatises, and we naturally and legitimately conclude that it had been written before this exact computation was made. From the period when these statistics were compiled, we go back to the time when certain commentaries on the Rig Veda, called *Sutras*, were penned. The necessity for such learned exegetical treatises, which led to their composition and circulation, shows that its language had even then become somewhat antiquated, and that its text had been somewhat obscured by obsolete forms of expression, such as could not be elucidated and explained except with the help of something like a critical, philological, or linguistic research. Besides, it appears from these commentaries that another class of writings, called

the *Brahmanas*, had existed before they were composed, and existed long enough to be invested with something like the sacredness with which the Rîg Veda itself was associated in the public mind

A long interval also must be presupposed between the time when the collection of the several hymns was completed, and that when, some explanation of the ritual observances connected with them being needed, such exegetical treatises as the *Brahmanas* were written. Allowing, then, a period of two hundred years between the time when the statistical records were compiled, and that when the *Sûtras* were written, another period of the same length between what may be called the *Sûtras* age and the time when the *Brahmanas* were composed, and an interval of similar length between the *Brahmana* period and the time when the collection was completed, we bring the date of the composition of the Rîg Veda, or rather the completion of its canon, back to about 1,200 years before the birth of Christ.

Again, the hymns of the Rîg Veda "are, according to their own showing, both ancient and modern." Now, allowing a period of three hundred years between the composition of the first and that of the second class, we fairly conclude that the hymns of the Rîg Veda were composed between the fifteenth and the twelfth century before the birth of our Lord.

Now this is the substance of Max Muller's argument in favour of the high antiquity of the book, to which he has devoted a quarter of a century of earnest and enthusiastic study. You will at once see that this argument, though good for all purposes of hasty generalisation, or fitted to lead to an approximate result where a thoroughly reliable conclusion is not possible, is very defective and open to many serious objections. The first link of the ascending chain is by no means made of solid gold. The date

assigned to the composition of the statistical treatises is by no means indisputably settled, and the various links between the different epochs pointed out are all missing

Not a single link, besides certain linguistic changes, which cannot possibly be made to indicate a reliable and immutable principle of chronology, is to be discovered between the statistical and the exegetical period, not one between the exegetical and what may be called the ceremonial age, and not one between the time when the ceremonies were elaborated and explained and that when the grand old hymns were collected into a sacred volume. And he is the boldest of all speculators who coolly undertakes the task of ascertaining, from the nature of the hymns themselves, apart from all external evidence, the varied dates of their composition

How differently is the date of the composition of the Pentateuch fixed! From Moses to Malachi, a period of upwards of a thousand years, there is an unbroken chain of writers and writings, of witnesses and testimonies, complete in all its parts, with scarcely a single link missing, a single gap which it needs a world of philological research and critical speculation to fill up

We casually refer to Max Muller's reasonings in support of the antiquity of the Rig Veda Sanhitas, only to show how very connected, cogent, and irrefragable is the argument we can bring forward in favour of the genuineness, authenticity, and integrity of the different books of the New Testament. The external evidence we have now to take into consideration is not only a hundredfold more complete and less objectionable than what we have dwelt upon, but far more convincing than any we can present in favour of the genuineness, authenticity, and integrity of any ancient book that can possibly be named

The terms genuineness, authenticity, and integrity need a formal explanation. No two technical terms have been so

loosely and so carelessly employed as the terms "genuineness" and "authenticity." Some distinguished writers have used either of these two well-known words in a sense the reverse of that attached to it by other eminent authors. The term genuineness means, in some well-written books, what the term authenticity means in others of equal merit. In the following discussions we use the words as they have been used by Dr. Chalmers and other well-known writers on Christian evidence. By the genuineness of a book we simply mean the fact that it was written by the person whose name it bears. By the authenticity of a book we mean its credibility, or that the historical accounts embodied in it are accurate and trustworthy. And by the integrity of a book we mean that it has come down to us substantially as it was written, or in other words, that its original text has not been corrupted or tampered with by interpolations and excisions.

In this and the next lecture we shall endeavour to prove that the different books of the New Testament were written by the parties whose names they bear, that they, as historical records, are in every respect reliable and trustworthy, and that they have come down to us substantially as they were written. The nature and exigencies of my argument do not compel me to bring forward evidence fitted to cover this entire field. My argument in favour of the miracles wrought by Christ will appear unassailable if I can only prove the genuineness and integrity of the historical books of the New Testament, but as the same mass of evidence which proves these features of these books also proves the genuineness, authenticity, and integrity of the entire volume, no distinction need be made.

The evidence in favour of the genuineness, authenticity, and integrity of the several books of the New Testament is both *external* and *internal*. We shall in this lecture con-

fine our attention to the external evidence, which may be marshalled, so to speak, under the following heads

- I —The Testimony of the Christian Fathers
- II —The Testimony of the early Heretics
- III —The Testimony of the early Infidels
- IV —The Testimony of Versions, Manuscripts, etc

I cannot be expected, within the limits which I must prescribe to myself, to do more than present the broad, general outlines or salient features of the evidence arranged under each of these heads

I —THE TESTIMONY OF THE CHRISTIAN FATHERS.

I The testimony of the Apostolic Fathers, or those who lived in the same age and conversed with the apostles, establishes the genuineness, authenticity, and integrity of the New Testament in general. These are Clement, Bishop of Rome, mentioned by Paul (Phil iv 3) as his fellow-labourer, Ignatius, who became Bishop of Antioch about thirty-seven years after Christ's ascension, and Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, a disciple and companion of the Apostle John. We set aside Barnabas, whose epistle, though declared genuine by Dr Tischendorf, the highest authority on the subject, bristles with rabbinical quibbles such as may naturally lead us to shrink from the idea of associating it with a name so justly revered as that of Paul's valued companion in the first of his recorded missionary tours. We also set aside the principal production of Hermas, with the remark that his extant writings, as well as the epistle ascribed to Barnabas, though inferior in antiquity to those of the Apostolic Fathers, are ancient enough to be classed or incorporated with the testimony of the sub-apostolic period.

α Clemens Romanus, whose epistle "from the Church of God sojourning at Rome to the Church of God sojourning

at Corinthus," is referred to by Irenæus, Dionysius, and other ancient writers, expressly mentions Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, and quotes from or alludes to eight of the books of the New Testament.

Read the following, and you cannot but conclude that the Gospel of Matthew was in existence when this was written "Especially remembering the words of the Lord Jesus which He spake, teaching gentleness and long-suffering, for thus He said 'Be ye merciful, that ye may obtain mercy, forgive, that it may be forgiven unto you, as you do, so shall it be done unto you, as you give, so shall it be given unto you, as ye judge, so shall it be judged, as ye show kindness, so shall kindness be shown unto you, with what measure ye mete, with the same shall it be measured unto you' By this command, and these rules, let us establish ourselves, that we may always walk obediently to His holy word"

The latter part of the following extract is fitted to show the prior existence of the Gospel of Luke, as the former part indubitably shows that of Matthew's Gospel "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, for He said, Woe to the man by whom offences come, for it were better for him that he had not been born, than that he should offend one of My elect, it were better for him that a millstone should be tied about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the sea, than that he should offend one of My little ones"

You will observe the great respect paid to the words of Christ, as contained in the Gospels, by Clement You will also observe that Clement's mode of quotation, without giving the exact words and referring to what we would call, in the phraseology of the day, chapter and verse, proves that the books were not only extant, but widely read and generally known in the Churches And further, Clement's testimony was supported by that of the entire Church of

Rome, in whose name, and with whose intelligent sanction, the epistle in question was written

b Ignatius is spoken of by Polycarp, Irenæus, Origen, and Eusebius as the writer of several valuable epistles. Of those epistles which bear his name, the genuineness of some has been disputed, but his three epistles, addressed severally to Polycarp, the Ephesians, and the Romans, have been proved genuine by Dr Cureton's discovery of a Syriac translation of these letters

He quotes from John's Gospel, as you will notice in the following extracts "Yet the Spirit is not deceived, being from God, for it knows whence it comes and whither it goes" (John iii 8) "He is the door of the Father, by which enter in Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the apostles, and the Church" (John v 9) Two unmistakable quotations from Matthew, several oblique allusions to four of the epistles, and the formal mention of that to the Ephesians (omitted in the Syriac version), complete his testimony The remark made on Clement's mode of quotation is also applicable to his in all its entirety

c Of Polycarp, Irenæus, his disciple, speaks thus "I can tell the place in which the blessed Polycarp sat and taught, and his going out and coming in, and the manner of his life, and the form of his person, and the discourses he made to people, and how he related his conversation with John and others who had seen the Lord, both concerning His miracles and His doctrines, as he had received them from the eye-witnesses of the Word of Life, all which Polycarp related agreeably to the Scriptures" There is one short epistle of Polycarp, that addressed by him to the Philippians, of unimpeachable genuineness In it there are no less than forty clear allusions to the New Testament, and these tend to establish the canonicity of fourteen of its books

The following extracts show the value set on the Lord's Prayer, and consequently the genuineness of Matthew, who

gives it *in extenso* "If therefore we pray the Lord that He will forgive us, we ought also to forgive," and "with supplication beseeching the all-seeing God not to lead us into temptation" The following is a pointed allusion to Peter's speech in the Acts of the Apostles "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death" The following passages show the high respect he paid to the New Testament Scriptures, which were very likely collected even in his days into a single volume "I trust that ye are well exercised in the *Holy Scriptures*, as in these Scriptures it is said, be ye angry and sin not, let not the sun go down upon your wrath," and "whoever perverts the oracles of God to his own lusts, and says there is neither resurrection nor judgment, he is the first-born of Satan"

If you carefully study the epistles extant of these Apostolic Fathers—and you can easily do so, as there is a volume presenting an English version of every one of these precious records—you will find that they abound, not with direct and formal quotations, such as may be ascribed to collusion or design, but with undesigned, oblique, and incidental references to the various books of the New Testament, and that they bristle with the peculiar forms of expression, the phraseology, and the imagery characteristic of the sacred volume Indeed, you cannot account even for the existence of this thin layer of epistolary correspondence without supposing the prior existence of the New Testament, which obviously forms its substratum

2 We have now to bring forward the testimony of the Sub-Apostolic Fathers, but before doing so let us refer to that of Papias, who is mentioned by Irenæus as "a hearer of John the Apostle," and supposed by modern critics to have been a disciple of John the Elder, a contemporary of the apostle of the same name, and who may be regarded as a sort of connecting link between the Apostolic and Sub-

Apostolic age He says that "Mark, the interpreter of Peter, wrote down carefully what he remembered," and that "Matthew wrote the discourses of the Lord in the Aramaic or current Hebrew language" His mode of reference to these two Gospels shows that they had existed in the Church from the beginning and that they were widely known He is vaunted by the great hostile critics of the age, and somewhat run down by Dr Tischendorf, but his testimony cannot but be regarded by all parties as of the most valuable kind

The literature of the Sub-Apostolic period was not merely hortatory, but apologetic, inasmuch as heresies had sprung up within the Church, and persecutions, initiated by Imperial Edicts, were raging uncontrolled around it, and it consists of almost every species of prose composition, letters, chronicles, essays, apologies, visions, and tales The fragments left of this body of literature show that its existence becomes an inexplicable mystery, if that of the New Testament is its basis is denied Omitting minor names, such as Quadratus, Diogenitus, Hegesippus, etc, let us confine ourselves to the ample and decisive testimony of Justyn Martyr and Irenæus

a Justin was a philosopher, and did not embrace Christianity till he had completely failed to pacify his awakened conscience in almost all the existing schools of philosophy He became an ornament of the Infant Church, defended its faith with sterling ability and extensive erudition, and ultimately sealed his testimony with his blood in the year of our Lord 166 Of his writings extant, two, his Apologies and his Dialogue with Trypho, are indisputably genuine

Although in his controversy with the Jews and Gentiles it was not necessary for him to appeal frequently to the New Testament, these books contain no less than between thirty and forty copious and unmistakable quotations from its historical books, and are besides regularly saturated,

so to speak, with Scripture phraseology and Scripture imagery. The following quotations, met with "within the compass of half a page," show that the first three Gospels were widely known in his days. "And in other words He says, 'Depart from Me into outer darkness, which the Father hath prepared for Satan and his angels' (Matt xii 41). 'And, again, He said in other words, 'I give unto you power to tread upon serpents, scorpions, and venomous beasts, and upon all the power of the enemy' (Luke x 19). 'And before He was crucified, He said, the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the Scribes and Pharisees, and be crucified and rise again the third day' (Mark viii 31)."

He quotes the very words of Matthew in his attempt to identify John the Baptist with Elias, speaks of the new name given to Simon, and also of the title Boanerges given to the two sons of Zebedee, with obvious reference to the Gospel of Mark, and quotes the last memorable prayer of Christ on the Cross—"Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit"—given only by Luke. He calls the Gospels *Memoirs of the Apostles*, or simply *memoirs*, and affirms that they "were composed by the Apostles, and those who followed them," an assertion which clearly shows that he speaks of Matthew and John as Apostles, and Mark and Luke as their followers. He moreover says that, in the services held in his day and generation, "the *Memoirs of the Apostles*, or the writings of the Prophets, are read as long as the time admits," clearly showing that the homage paid to the New Testament was in no way inferior to that accorded to the Old.

b Irenæus succeeded Pothinus in the Bishopric of Lyons about A.D. 177, and so flourished during the last three decades of the second century. He was a disciple of Polycarp, and therefore so intimately connected with the Apostolic times that his testimony may be quoted as in the

highest degree important and decisive He was evidently a man of vast information, and a voluminous writer, but with the exception of his five books against heresies, all his works are lost. He mentions the code of the New Testament in contradistinction to that of the Old Testament, and calls it the Oracles of God He alludes to and quotes from all the books of the New Testament canon, excepting the Epistles to Philemon and Jude and the Third of John The value of his testimony is seen in the fact that, according to Dr Tischendorf, about four hundred allusions to the Gospels, of which more than eighty are quotations from the Gospel of John, are scattered through these five books

The following is the triumphant way in which he speaks of the genuineness, authenticity, and canonicity of the New Testament narratives "We have not received the knowledge of the way of our salvation by any other than those by whom the Gospel has been brought to us, which Gospel they first preached, and afterwards by the will of God committed to writing, that it might be for time to come the foundation and pillar of our faith For after our Lord rose from the dead, and they were endued from above with the power of the Holy Ghost coming down upon them, they received a perfect knowledge of all things They then went forth to all the ends of the earth, declaring to men the blessing of heavenly peace, having all of them, and every one alike, the Gospel of God. Matthew, then among the Jews, wrote a Gospel in their own language, while Peter and Paul were preaching the Gospel at Rome and founding a Church there And, after their exit, Mark also, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, delivered to us in writing the things that had been preached by Peter, and Luke, the companion of Paul, put down in a book the Gospel preached by him Afterwards John, the disciple of the Lord, who also leaned upon His breast, he likewise published a Gospel while he dwelt at Ephesus, in Asia "

Here, if anywhere, is testimony of the most convincing kind ! Irenæus not only affirms that the Gospels are four in number, but resorts to some fanciful arguments, such as the four great points of the compass and the four faces of a Cherubim, to prove that there can be only four Gospels, not one more and not one less

c The Muratorian canon, discovered by the learned man whose name it bears in a manuscript in the Ambrosian Library at Milan, comes, properly speaking, between Justin and Irenæus, having been written about the year 170, a short time after the composition of the Shepherd of Hermas, during the episcopate of Bishop Pius, his brother This valuable fragment proves the canonicity of all the books of the New Testament, except a few of the epistles, regarding which it is only silent.

The author of this mutilated catalogue thus sets forth the Divine authorship and unity of the Gospels "Though various points are taught in each of the Gospels, it makes no difference to the faith of believers, since, in all of them, all things are declared by one informing Spirit concerning the nativity, the passion, the resurrection, the conversation [of our Lord] with His disciples, and His double advent, at first in humility, and afterwards in royal power, as He will yet appear" The testimony of Clemens Alexandrinus, who gives an account of the order in which the four Gospels were composed, and who draws a sharp line of demarcation between these and the Apocryphal Gospels, belongs to this period

We come now to the Post-Apostolic Fathers, or those who flourished in the third and fourth centuries It will require a regular volume to present the copious, rich, and explicit testimony of this period in all its entirety Nor is it necessary to do so It is necessary to take pains to discover the sources of a broad river like the Amazon, but no trouble is needed to show its prodigious volume and

sea-like expanse, as with the huge mass of waters discharged by its innumerable tributaries, it slowly advances where it is destined to lose itself in the unfathomable and almost interminable ocean. We will therefore pass over the goodly host of witnesses before us, and catechise and examine the three or four divines who appear at first sight taller than most of them.

a Tertullian flourished only a few years after Irenæus, and died in the year 222. He says "Among the Apostles John and Matthew teach us the faith, among Apostolic men, Luke and Mark refresh it." He emphatically affirms that the four Gospels had been received from the very beginning in all the Churches, and he brings forward this undisputed fact to oppose the curtailed edition of Luke used by the disciples of the heretic Marcion. He frequently refers to the Acts of the Apostles under the title of Luke's Commentary, and, in the words of Dr Lardner, we meet with in his books "more and larger quotations of the small volume of the New Testament, than there are of all the works of Cicero in writers of all characters for several ages."

Let us here quote what Paley says of the extent of territory covered by the testimony already produced. "It is now only about one hundred and fifty years since Christ was crucified, and within this period, to say nothing of the Apostolic Fathers who have been noticed already, we have Justyn Martyr at Neapolis, Theophilus at Antioch, Irenæus in France, Clement at Alexandria, Tertullian at Carthage, quoting the same books of historical scriptures, and, I may say, quoting these alone."

b About thirty years after Tertullian came Origen of Alexandria, a learned divine and voluminous writer, who recommended Christianity, both by the excellencies of his writings and by the lofty, though perhaps somewhat ascetic, virtues of a singularly elevated life. He says, in an extract from his writings given by Eusebius, that "the four Gospels

alone are received without dispute by the whole Church of God under heaven" Regarding the Acts of the Apostles he says, "And Luke also once more sounds the trumpet relating the Acts of the Apostles." He wrote a threefold exposition of most of the books of the New Testament, viz, Scholia or Short Notes, Tomes or Extensive Commentaries, and Harmonies and Tracts for the people. His testimony to the genuineness of the New Testament is as full as could be desired

c Eusebius, Bishop of Cæsarea, flourished about the year 315 He was a man of extensive learning, and a diligent student of what might be called, even in his days, the antiquities of the Church, of which he wrote a comprehensive and entertaining History—a popular work, of which an English version may be found in every good library

After a careful study of the records of the period intervening between the death of Christ and his own time, he divides the various books of the New Testament into two classes—those which had been unanimously received by the Church as canonical, and those regarding the canonicity of which there had been some dispute The former, called by him *Acknowledged Divine Writings*, are the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles of Paul, the First Epistle of John, and the First of Peter The latter, called *Contradicted Writings*, are the Epistle of James, the Epistle of Jude, Second Epistle of Peter, the Second and Third Epistles of John, and the Revelation These disputed books, however, had generally been received as of Divine origin Eusebius further mentions the Apocryphal Scriptures as books which had been unanimously rejected from the very beginning

His testimony may be regarded as the concurrent testimony of the Church of the first three centuries, and shows that the New Testament had been received as of canonical

authority by the eminent Christians of these early times after careful investigation

d The last witness we shall examine is Jerome, who flourished in the latter half of the fourth century. He was both a scholar and an antiquarian, and his testimony, seconded and supported by suitable researches, extensive travels, and a long residence in Palestine, is of the most valuable kind. In his *Epistle to Paulinus*, on the study of the Holy Scriptures, he presents a catalogue of the various books of the New Testament. He mentions the four Gospels in their present order, speaks of the Acts as a production of Luke, refers to St Paul's Epistles to the Seven Churches indicated in the Canon, as well as to his Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon, alludes to the General Epistles of Peter, John, and Jude, whom he calls Apostles, and represents the Revelation as a tissue of "holy mysteries." He refers to the current doubts concerning the Pauline authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews, but from a passage found elsewhere in his works we may conclude that he himself was convinced of it.

There is not the slightest necessity for our pursuing the stream of testimony farther, inasmuch as from this period it has come down, broadening and broadening, till in our day it has become a vast ocean-like expanse, smiling, so to speak, over the most civilised regions of the globe.

II—THE TESTIMONY OF THE EARLY HERETICS

The testimony of the Heretical writers of the first three centuries of the Christian era to the genuineness, authenticity, and integrity of the New Testament Canon is even more valuable than that of the Christian Fathers of this age. We cannot but receive it with the unbounded confidence which we instinctively attach to the testimony of Judas Iscariot to the spotless purity of Christ's character.

and motives Had Christ been the author of a fraud secretly hatched in the quietude of His narrow circle of disciples, or had there been a flaw in His character, or a blot in His plan, Judas would certainly have been aware of it, and therefore, when he publicly confesses that he has sinned in betraying "innocent blood," throws away his ill-gotten money, and in a fit of uncontrollable remorse goes and hangs himself, the thorough rectitude of Christ's motives, together with the virgin purity of His life and character, is proved to a demonstration

Now some of the heresiarchs of these early times were thrust out of the Church, and if the writings on which its faith was based had been spurious, they would have been the first persons to have declared them to be such And, therefore, when they not only admit their genuineness, but try to prop up their erroneous systems by authoritative quotations from them, the great reverence paid to them as the productions of inspired men is demonstrated Their testimony is condensed in the following paragraphs

α Simon Magus and Cerinthus were heretics of the Apostolic age Hippolytus, a disciple of Irenæus, wrote an elaborate treatise on heresy, and in this, recently discovered, there are many quotations from a writing named "the Great Announcement," or an account of the Revelation with which Simon Magus professed to have been favoured, drawn out by one of his disciples. These extracts embody clear and definite allusions to the Gospel of Matthew, while the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians is referred to in a manner which shows that he regarded it as on a par with the Old Testament in canonical authority The Cerinthians, according to Epiphanius, "made use of Matthew's Gospel like the Ebionites on account of the human genealogy," but rejected the Epistles of Paul The fact that the New Testament refers to the forms of heresy promulgated by these sects—not to its later manifestations

in vogue in the second and third centuries—is a proof that it was actually written in the early age in which it professes to have been composed

b The Ophites belong to the sub-Apostolic age The passages quoted by Hippolytus from their writings contain allusions to the Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John, and several of the epistles

c Basilides, who lived not long after, was the head of one of the many Gnostic sects which strove to assimilate Christianity to current systems of philosophy Far from attempting to bring the New Testament into disrepute, he tries to squeeze his erratic system out of its different books He calls the Epistles of Paul "Scripture," and introduces quotations from them by the well-known formula, "It is written" The fragments of his writings preserved in Hippolytus contain plain references to the Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John, as well as to several of the epistles

d Valentinus began to propagate his system a short time after Basilides had succeeded in establishing his He quotes from the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians as "Scripture," and refers clearly to the Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John He distinctly quotes Paul as his authority and guide, as Basilides had quoted Peter as his This circumstance shows that heresy could not be propagated in those early times except when paraded under the assumed sanction of an Apostle of Christ

e Heracleon, a contemporary of Valentinus, was the first commentator of the New Testament Some fragments of his Commentary on Luke and John have been preserved by Clement of Alexandria and Origen, and these contain allusions to the Gospel of Matthew, to the Epistles of Paul to the Romans and to the Corinthians, and to one of Paul's Pastoral Epistles to Timothy The fact that elaborate commentaries were written to explain the meaning of disputed passages, and to account for apparent discrepan-

cies, shows the profound reverence paid to these books as the inspired oracles of God

f Passing over minor sects, we come to Marcion, who avowedly based his dogmas on a collection of the sacred writings, which he divided into two parts, viz, the "Gospel" and the "Apostolicon" His Gospel was a recension of Luke, with numerous interpolations, and his Apostolicon contained all the Epistles of Paul excepting that to the Hebrews and those called Pastoral His testimony to the genuineness of these books of the New Testament is clear and definite Marcion was excommunicated for misconduct, and would have gladly overturned the documentary basis of Christianity, if such an act of destruction had only been possible

g Tatian, a contemporary of Marcion, wrote a harmony of the four Gospels called the Diatessaron Who can call his testimony in question? Is not Irenæus correct when he triumphantly affirms, "So well established are our Gospels that even teachers of error themselves bear testimony to them even they rest their objections on the foundation of the Gospels"?

Under this head we may bring forward the evidence in favour of the genuineness and authenticity of the New Testament embodied in the Apocryphal literature associated with it. These writings presuppose the existence of our Gospels, and are intended to supplement, not contradict, the narratives embodied in them The Gospel of the Infancy, for instance, fills that portion of the life of Christ on which the canonical Gospels are almost entirely silent, with a number of wild, fantastic, and ridiculous wonders and miracles The Gospel of James was evidently written to confirm and adorn the account given in Matthew and Luke of the miraculous conception of Christ in the womb of Virgin Mary And the Acts of Pilate confirm the main facts given in the New Testament regarding the crucifixion

and resurrection of Christ The account given in this book of the trial of Christ is based on, and presupposes the existence of John's Gospel No one can compare these spurious with the genuine Gospels without noticing a chasm between these two classes of writings as wide as that which separates truth from falsehood

III —THE TESTIMONY OF HEATHEN ADVERSARIES

But our testimony comes not only from friends, true and false, but from the camp of our enemies Not only do the early Christian fathers and heretics, but the infidel writers of the first three centuries, bear testimony to the genuineness, authenticity, and integrity of the New Testament Scriptures In their most virulent attacks on Christianity they never hesitate to refer to these books as both genuine and authentic, and, instead of depreciating their historical value, they try to convert the facts they relate into arguments against the religion they teach The infidelity of those early times occupies a position the very antipodes of that occupied by the infidelity of these days, the miraculous story inwoven in Gospel narrative, the stock theme of infidel attack now, was then universally admitted by the enemies as well as the friends of Christianity

α The acutest and the most malignant of the opponents of Christianity who flourished in these early times was Celsus, who lived in the latter part of the second century He wrote against Christianity a book called the True Word, considerable portions of which are preserved in his own words in Origen's reply to it, now extant In these extracts there are no less than eighty clear and definite references to the New Testament All the principal events of Christ's life, from His immaculate conception to His resurrection and ascension, are referred to and ridiculed The miracles of Christ are represented as real occurrences,

but explained away as tricks of legerdemain. The Christian books are again and again referred to, and the absurdity of the religion taught in them is proved by passages drawn from them. Celsus was both learned and acute, and as he lived only about a hundred years after the events narrated in the Gospels, he could have easily ascertained their spurious and deceptive character, had not these books been genuine and authentic.

b Porphyry, who was born 230 A.D., was a learned and sensible opponent of Christianity. By extensive travels, friendly intercourse with the sect of the Nazarenes, and researches conducted for a number of years with ability and diligence, he rendered himself competent to sit in judgment on the genuineness and authenticity of the Canon. But while he represented some of the prophecies of Daniel as narratives penned after the events referred to had occurred, he does not express the slightest doubt as to the genuineness and authenticity of the writings containing the facts and doctrines of Christianity. He directly refers to the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and John, the Acts, and the Epistle to the Galatians. He admits the miracles, and, like Celsus, tries to destroy Christianity with weapons drawn from what may be called the armoury of the New Testament.

c Julian, the Apostate, lived a century later. From various extracts from his writings, given by Jerome and Cyril, it is evident that he admitted the genuineness and authenticity of the New Testament, and even accepted the miracles of Christ as established facts. He points out the difference between the genealogy given in Matthew and that given in Luke, noticing these evangelists by name, admits that the Gospel of John was written later than the other three, and refers to several facts chronicled in the Acts of the Apostles. He dwells upon the antiquity of the New Testament, and takes its genuineness and authenticity for granted.

IV —THE TESTIMONY OF MANUSCRIPTS, VERSIONS, ETC

The genuineness, authenticity, and integrity of the New Testament in general are further attested by the ancient versions and manuscripts of the New Testament in existence. To begin with the ancient translations of the New Testament, the Peshito, or the Syriac, or Aramaic version, referred to by several of the Fathers, could not have been made later than the middle of the second century. The old Latin version, made at Carthage, has been traced by the learned to about the same period. The Ethiopic and the Armenian versions were made in the middle of the fourth century, and the Gothic was made not much later. There is no use in bringing the testimony further down, as all sensible men are agreed that there is an unbroken chain of translations of the New Testament connecting the present century with the apostolic times.

Again, as to the manuscripts extant, the oldest may be traced, with one exception to be noticed, to the fourth century, and, through the manuscripts examined by Jerome when he revised the old Latin version, they may be traced back to the Apostolic times. The manuscripts extant are no less than seven hundred in number, and a careful collation of them, in conjunction with an equally careful examination of the citations from the New Testament with which the writings of the Fathers abound, may enable us to ascertain the very words which flowed from the pens of the sacred penmen, or were dictated to their amanuenses.

We cannot close this branch of evidence without a reference to the Sinaitic manuscript recently discovered by Dr Tischendorf amid difficulties of an insuperable character thrown in his way by what may be called the spirit of monopoly embodied in priestly cunning, or by monastic exclusiveness. One cannot read his interesting little book entitled, "When were our Gospels written?" to which an account of

the chivalrous discovery is prefixed, without feeling sure that this ancient Greek manuscript, traced by the discoverer to the second century, has been providentially brought to light to silence the objections, doubts, and cavils circulated by designing men to bring the sacred canon of the New Testament into disrepute

A word about the monumental evidence in favour of the historical value of the New Testament, and we shall have done. The innumerable tombs found in the Catacombs of Rome, together with the figures, effigies, and inscriptions engraved thereon, attest all the remarkable facts of Gospel history,—the miracles of Christ, His death, burial, resurrection and ascension, with symbolical representations of the parables of Christ, and the broad features of His general teachings, are found recorded, as it were, in almost every nook and corner of these subterranean halls of the illustrious dead of the Church of the first three centuries. We need not dwell on these now, as we shall have in a separate discourse to take a detailed notice of the confirmation and vivid elucidation Gospel history derives from those dens and caves to which persecution obliged the first professors of Christianity to betake themselves.

Such are the principal items of the External Evidence which may be presented in favour of the genuineness, authenticity, and integrity of the various books of the New Testament in general, and of its historical books in particular. We need not say that they are a thousandfold more satisfactory than the few sporadic proofs arrayed by Professor Max Muller in attestation of his view of the high antiquity of the Rig Veda. Here you have not merely a few unconnected facts and scattered allusions, but one entire and unbroken chain connecting the times when these Scriptures were penned with our own. Nor is the testimony we bring forward one-sided, borne by one country, nation, language, religion, or sect.

We have Jews and Gentiles, Greeks and Barbarians, Heretics and Infidels, friends and foes, all uniting their voices in concurrent, copious, and irresistible testimony to the unexceptionable accuracy of our Sacred Scriptures. And the sceptics, who try to depreciate their historical value, have not even a shadow of proof to bring forward in favour of their avowed infidelity. Like the great free-thinkers of modern Germany, they carp where they should judge, dogmatise where they should reason, and pile up theories where they should present proofs. They ignore, or wilfully forget, the fact that no book has come down to us from those early times with a stream of testimony in favour of its credibility or acceptability so mighty and irresistible as that which proves the genuineness, authenticity, and integrity of the New Testament.

The learned and clever author of the *Eclipse of Faith* shows, in his half-serious and half-playful style, how, if all the Bibles of the world were made blank by an inauspicious miracle, the lost treasure might be recovered. The memories of Christian men and Christian women, on which almost all its precious verses are indelibly engraved, would restore to Christendom almost the entire sacred text of which it would find itself so suddenly, and in such a strange manner, deprived. Every Christian would bring out of the garner of his memory the verses suited to his circumstances and tastes, and in this manner its different portions, appropriated and assimilated by different minds, would be restored almost in their original integrity. The few verses not found in the sacred house of Christian memory, would be supplied by the religious literature of the age.

We may venture the assertion that if the whole of the New Testament were lost, or rather made blank by the malignant influences of an evil star, the treasure could be very easily recovered. If the sacred literature of the first three centuries of the Christian era were examined, and the

citations from the New Testament embodied therein, were culled and systematically arranged, the lost Canon would be restored, and the faith of Christendom nourished and strengthened by the food Christ Himself had provided through the instrumentality of His inspired Apostles

No book has been embalmed in human hearts amid such deep feelings of reverence and love, no book has been enshrined in human memories with such exuberance of care, no book has had in this world a career so chequered and so grand, and no book has, amid vicissitudes and reverses of the most appalling character, shown a vitality so elastic, and an indestructibility so complete, as the Bible, with its two parts of the Old and New Testaments !

VI.

INTERNAL EVIDENCE.

THE high antiquity of the Rîg Veda is proved by internal, as well as the external evidence indicated in the opening paragraph of my last lecture. Its language, the forms of expression, the phraseology, and the imagery of which it is full, the local allusions in which it abounds, and the glimpses of social life it presents, all tend to mark it as one of the oldest books extant in any country in the world.

The language of the Rîg Veda is Sanscrit in its incipient stages of development, as far removed from the polished and perfected Sanscrit of later times as the English of Chaucer is removed from the English of Tennyson, it therefore traces its composition to those primitive times when the rich and sonorous language of the gods was in what may be called an embryonic state. The forms of expression with which the sacred hymns are draped are archaic, the imagery they present is simple and unadorned, the habits of thought they indicate are those of a people passing through the incipient stages of progress, and the features of social life they disclose are decidedly of a patriarchal order.

The Rîg Veda Sanhitas irresistibly lead the mind back to those good old times when the simple pleasures, the innocent pastimes, and the rough but honest manners of a sturdy agricultural people had not been displaced by

the refined luxuries, the vapid dissipations, and the elaborate etiquette of a more civilised state of life, when human defection from the worship of One Living and True God had not degenerated into gross types of idolatry, when the principles and forces of nature were regarded and adored as living beings of superhuman, if not Divine, power, when human thought naturally expressed itself in what Milton calls harmonious numbers, and prose composition was despised, when the simplest ideas were conveyed through the simplest symbols, and logical analysis and philosophical generalisation were unknown.

In like manner the genuineness, authenticity, and integrity of the New Testament in general, and of its historical books in particular, are proved, not only by means of an external evidence a hundredfold more convincing than what can be arrayed in favour of the historical value of any other ancient book in existence, but by an internal evidence equally cogent and satisfactory. The language in which the New Testament is written, its simple, unassuming style, its composite form of expression, its local and historical allusions, both direct and incidental, its undesigned coincidences, and the harmony which subsists between its different parts,—all these, together with the evident impossibility of anything like a successful attempt to interpolate or tamper with its sacred text, tend to refer its composition to the era which intervenes between the accession of Herod the Great and the destruction of Jerusalem—that is, to the age when it professes to have been written.

The Internal Evidence in favour of the genuineness, authenticity, and integrity of the New Testament ranges itself under the following heads

- I —The Language and Style of the New Testament
- II —The Local and Historical Allusions scattered through the New Testament.

III —The Undesigned Coincidences by means of which the different parts of the New Testament confirm each other

IV —The Impossibility of a Successful Attempt to forge a book like the New Testament, or to tamper with its text

Let me add what I said in my last lecture, that the limits of a single discourse make it impossible for me to do anything more than present the salient features of the argument under each of these four heads.

I —THE LANGUAGE AND STYLE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

α You are aware that the New Testament was originally written in Greek. There is a tradition, not unsupported by reliable testimony, to the effect that two of its twenty-seven books, viz, the Gospel of Matthew and the Epistle to the Hebrews, were at first written in Hebrew, but as they were early translated into Greek, either by the authors themselves or under their supervision, the fact does not clash with our general assertion that the New Testament was originally written in Greek.

Now the Greek of the New Testament is not the pure and polished Greek of classic times, but the mixed, adulterated Greek, which resulted from the fusion of the various dialects of ancient Greece consequent on the Macedonian conquest, and which became a sort of *Lingua-Franca* in the Roman Empire. This composite and corrupt language was in the first century spoken and written by the educated classes throughout Syria, of which country Palestine was regarded as a province, as English is spoken and written by the educated classes in India. And this, therefore, is precisely the language which the writers of the New Testament, anxious as they were to secure the widest

possible circulation to their works, or to stamp upon them the character of universality, would most naturally employ

b The New Testament Greek, moreover, is not merely the rough, rugged, composite Greek spoken by the educated classes in Syria in the first century, but that Greek further vitiated by Oriental idioms and Hebraistic forms of expression. The Hebraisms with which the New Testament abounds consist in an inevitable transference to its Greek of a very large number of the grammatical constructions, words, phrases, and forms of speech essentially Hebrew. We say *inevitable transference* because, though the language of ancient Greece was one of the most copious, flexible, and powerful in the world, it could not possibly express all the sublime ideas of Christianity without such assistance as was utilised by the writers of the New Testament.

These Hebraisms prove that the writers of the sacred books of the New Testament canon were not only inhabitants of Syria, but Hebrews by birth, thoroughly versed in their national modes of thought and expression, but not so well rooted and grounded in Greek as to be entirely freed from their influences. Amongst them there was certainly a man of learning, but he had been brought up at the feet of an eminent Hebrew scholar, not in schools of Greek scholarship.

c But there is a peculiarity in the Greek of the New Testament which indubitably places its composition somewhere between the reign of Herod the Great and the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. This Greek is further corrupted by a number of Latinisms which became fashionable when Palestine was in reality, if not in name, a Roman province. The use of such words as *Centurion*, *Legion*, *Denarius*, *Census*, etc., shows that the books were composed when not merely the Greek, but the Roman influence predominated in Palestine. And this joint influence of a

foreign character prevailed only in the age coming between the accession of Herod the Great and the ultimate destruction of the Jewish polity by Titus, not in any time previous or subsequent to this period

d From the language we come to the style of the New Testament, and herein we find additional evidence in support and confirmation of the conclusion that its various books were composed at the time when they are said to have been written, and by the parties whose names they bear. The books are written in the rough, rugged, and earnest style employed by ordinary men when their attention is more fixed on the truths they proclaim than the words they make use of, not in the polished and attractive style which only men of superior education can command. In the New Testament we notice neither the attractive imagery, the brilliant antitheses, and the harmonious flow of words by which the writings of ancient Greek authors are said to be characterised, nor the inflated diction, the incongruous metaphors, and the harsh transitions which a half educated man, ambitious of distinguishing himself as a writer, cannot avoid. Its simple, rugged, and earnest style accords exactly with what we know of the position, circumstances, and character of the writers, and is therefore an indisputable proof of genuineness.

e The absence of anything like an anachronism in the language and style of the New Testament proves the integrity of its text, or its freedom from interpolation. Had passages been foisted in some time after the destruction of Jerusalem, when all purely Hebraistic influences had been extinguished, and Latin influences were paramount, a marked discordance between their language and diction and those of the portions written before this revolution had been accomplished could scarcely have been avoided. The absence, therefore, of anything in the language fitted to disturb its harmony with the spirit of the times when the

several books are said to have been written, proves their integrity as well as their genuineness

Observe, also, that the New Testament could not possibly have been written in the language in which it is written in any period previous to the time when Judea became a Roman province, or in any period subsequent to the time when the civil polity of the Jews was entirely destroyed, and you cannot but conclude that its linguistic peculiarities thoroughly accord with all we know of the position and circumstances of the writers

II.—THE LOCAL AND HISTORICAL ALLUSIONS SCATTERED OVER THE NEW TESTAMENT

If you carefully study a historical play of Shakespeare, or a historical novel of Sir Walter Scott, you will meet a variety of anachronisms, or allusions, historical or ethnological, such as are correct enough when applied to the age and country in which the writer lived, but wholly inaccurate when applied to the times and scenes which he endeavours to portray.

The most intelligent and gifted authors cannot, in disinterring the buried realities of a past age, wholly emancipate themselves from the spirit and influences of their own. And so in the most elaborate productions of the best of dramatists and novelists, you find facts mentioned, manners depicted, and customs and institutions alluded to, which are all out of place, being realities of the ages when the writers lived rather than of those of which they attempt to present vivid, lifelike sketches and pictures

Hence it is impossible to forge a set of writings, and ascribe them to writers who lived in a past age, without betraying by unmistakable signs the very thing to be concealed, viz., their forgery. It is also a matter of fact

that, whenever a literary forgery has been attempted, it has been detected, and its author publicly exposed. Now, if it is generally impossible to execute a literary forgery with success, it is particularly so when an attempt is made to forge a set of writings like those embodied in the New Testament. The New Testament depicts scenes enacted in, perhaps, the most revolutionary period of Jewish history, and is full of allusions, both direct and incidental, to the politics, manners, and customs, not only of the Jews, but also of the Greeks and Romans. Its narratives embrace a transitional and striking period of history, cover a wide extent of territory, and present glimpses of the political and social condition of the fairest and most civilised countries under the world-wide sway of ancient Rome.

Now, a set of writings like those contained in the New Testament, if forged, would be more decidedly liable to detection than a set of writings embracing a less stirring and eventful period, covering a smaller extent of territory, and embodying fewer local allusions. The more extraordinary and anomalous the period depicted in a literary fabrication is, the more numerous are the chances of detection. The wider the extent of territory covered by such a production is, the more numerous are the chances of detection. And lastly, the more numerous and more minute and incidental the allusions embodied are, the more numerous are the chances of detection. Now, all the circumstances which tend to multiply almost indefinitely the chances of detection and exposure in a literary fabrication are combined in the New Testament.

Let us prove (*a*) that the New Testament portrays scenes enacted in one of the most exciting and anomalous periods in the annals of a peculiar people, (*b*) that its narratives cover a wide and almost illimitable territory, a territory co extensive with the entire empire of ancient Rome, and (*c*) that the local allusions of which it is full are not only

very great in number, but minute, oblique, and incidental in their character

a The period of Jewish history portrayed, naturally and incidentally, but not designedly, in the New Testament is not merely eventful, but remarkably transitional and anomalous in its character. It was emphatically a period of frequent changes, harsh transitions, and violent revolutions. The administrative system or the *régime* of Palestine was radically and essentially altered no less than five times within the period of about half a century. It was at first a united kingdom under a native ruler, then a cluster of principalities under native Ethnarchs and Tetrarchs, then a country partly consisting of such principalities and partly reduced to a Roman province, then united once more under a native sovereign, and lastly a state wholly reduced to the condition of a Roman province, but yet subject in some respects to the control of the Jewish sovereign of a neighbouring kingdom.

In the midst of these political convulsions the country enjoyed certain peculiar privileges, such as gave it a unique character among the dependencies of Rome, in consequence of the fact that it had been made over to the Romans by an influential faction, not conquered by them. It was regarded as an allied state, was allowed a sort of autonomy, and was placed under political circumstances which developed a double government similar to what obtained in Bengal when the Nawab of Murshedabad was something more than an illustrious pensioner. Now these changes, together with the privileges they left intact, are all referred to incidentally, not designedly, in the New Testament, nor can a single mistake be discovered among the innumerable allusions casually made to the varied transitions of an eminently revolutionary period.

If we compare what the Evangelists casually say regarding the sovereignty and character of Herod the Great, the

partition of his kingdom among his sons, the character of Archelaus, the reduction of Judæa to the condition of a Roman province, the double government, the division of power between the Procurator and the High Priest, the two classes of tribunals, civil and ecclesiastical, the two systems of taxation, the resuscitation of the united kingdom under Herod Agrippa, the peculiar circumstances attending his death, and the final restoration of the rule of Procurators, with the influence of Agrippa the Second in ecclesiastical matters—if we only compare the collateral light thrown by the Evangelists on these facts with the light thrown on them in the pages of the great Jewish historian, Josephus, we cannot but conclude that the accurate and unexceptionable knowledge they display of the ins and outs of a remarkably revolutionary period is the knowledge of contemporaries and eye-witnesses, not that of men who had studied them from a distance, either of time or of place

The fact, moreover, that even Tacitus has fallen into gross mistakes in treating of this period is a proof, not only of the complications associated with it, but also of the impossibility for any but a contemporary to be successful in giving a delineation so minutely exact as the one presented in the New Testament. The nature of these local and historical allusions, their incidental and oblique character, together with the absence of anything like art and labour, precludes the supposition of an elaborate fabrication. The change of government, for instance, consequent on the death of Herod the Great, is not graphically described, not even formally mentioned, it is simply hinted at in the incident of Joseph and Mary being afraid, on their return from Egypt, to go to Judæa, in consequence of the rule therein of Archelaus, and of them actually choosing a town in Galilee, which was beyond the pale of that wicked monarch's sway, as their place of abode

b, The extent of territory covered by these allusions is

wide as the Roman world We find within the compass of this small volume vivid, life-like sketches of the political and social peculiarities, not of one or two countries, but of all the lands united under one *umbrella* by the mighty power of Rome, correct portraits of the manners and customs, not of one or two nationalities, but of all the peoples brought under the Roman sway by a scheme of conquest which, in comprehensiveness and success, has never been surpassed, scarcely ever rivalled

The picture presented of the social and moral condition of the Jews, their impatience under foreign rule, their unmitigated and unmitigable hatred of the Romans, their internal divisions and clannish feuds, their uncontrollable and turbulent spirit, their reverence for the forms of religion, combined with their practical denial of its power, their religious controversies, carried on with the highest degree of theological rancour by the Pharisees, the Popular, and the Sadducees, the Aristocratic party, their gross immorality and wickedness—the picture presented in the New Testament of the condition of the Jews, harmonises in its minutest details with that drawn by the great Jewish historian, while their national expectation that a great deliverer was about to appear in their midst is referred to by Suetonius and Tacitus, as well as by Josephus

Again, we find here short but vivid sketches of the temper and manners of the flourishing Jewish colonies scattered throughout the Roman Empire—sketches which accord thoroughly with what we might reasonably expect, and what we gather regarding them from other contemporary sources of information, such as Herod Agrippa's letter to Caligula and the writings of Philo

Again, glimpses are presented of the manners and customs of the Greeks, such as are proved unexceptionably correct by the concurrent testimony of heathen historians. Nowhere, perhaps, can you meet with a truer and

more life-like portrait of Athens, and the chief employment of her intelligent and refined people, than in the Acts of the Apostles, and nowhere do we see a more faithful catalogue of the gross vices which prevailed along with ancient civilisation than in the first chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans.

Again, we see in the New Testament the varied features of Roman civilisation stamped on a variety of incidents related and facts mentioned. The admirable constitution of the Roman Empire, the mild and equitable spirit of the Roman law, the justice enshrined in the procedure of the Roman courts, the privilege given to the meanest of the subjects to confront their accusers and speak in their own defence, the contempt with which Roman governors regarded all popular manifestations of faith, and the superstitious attachment of the people to the national religion—all these, and other circumstances of the kind, are exhibited in their true colours by means of casual references, rather than a formal delineation.

c The vast number and striking variety of the local allusions with which the New Testament bristles have already been pointed out. We have now to set forth their minuteness and incidental character by a couple of appropriate illustrations. Paul's journey from Jerusalem to Rome, as described in the concluding chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, is our first example. If you carefully study the historical and geographical treatises, as well as the itineraries and guide-books of these days, you will find that the routes indicated, the harbours touched at, and the towns visited in this journey, may all be verified, while there is not the slightest inaccuracy in the short sketches the writer presents of the manners, customs, and political institutions of the different parts of the wide extent of territory passed through.

The other example is borrowed from the circumstances

attending the crucifixion of Christ The Evangelists, in their graphic account of this central event of Gospel history, naturally relate a number of incidents which harmonise with the spirit and demands of the law then prevalent in the Roman world so completely, that their claims as eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses of what they narrate are placed above suspicion

Christ is formally sentenced to crucifixion—the formal sentence was demanded by the Roman law He is scourged—the scourging, though outrageously cruel, was prescribed by the Roman law He is compelled to carry the cross to which He was to be nailed—another requisition of the Roman law A superscription is written over His head, setting forth, in three different languages, the crime for which He was crucified—another coincidence with the demands of the Roman law His garment becomes the perquisite of the soldiers appointed to carry out the sentence of execution under a centurion, His friends are allowed the privilege of burying His mangled corpse—these and other incidents of the great tragedy agree most thoroughly with the spirit and requirements of the Roman law in the case of persons sentenced to this most ignominious and horrible of all deaths

III.—THE UNDESIGNED COINCIDENCES, BY MEANS OF WHICH THE DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CONFIRM EACH OTHER

Dr Paley, following possibly a pregnant suggestion of Dr Doddridge, elaborated an important argument in favour of the authenticity of the narrative embodied in the Acts of the Apostles In the Epistles of Paul there are innumerable allusions to the events chronicled in that historical work, and these allusions being oblique rather than direct, incidental rather than formal, casual rather

than designed, and being, moreover, minutely and unexceptionally accurate, the veracity of both the classes of writings must needs be taken for granted in order to account for the wonderful harmony subsisting between them. In other words, we meet with, in comparing the Epistles of Paul with his biography as presented in the Acts of the Apostles, innumerable coincidences without design, such as could not possibly have existed if the historical record had been a fabrication and the letters forgeries.

Dr Paley, in his well-known treatise, *Horæ Paulinæ*, takes these Epistles one by one, and by a masterly array of undesigned coincidences proves their harmony with the Acts, in such a way that we are regularly driven to the necessity of acknowledging the historical credibility of the one set of writings and the genuineness of the other.

I can only present a couple of samples. In the second chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, verse 12, occur these words "For before that certain came from James, he (Peter) did eat with the Gentiles." These words set forth casually the pre-eminence enjoyed by James in Jerusalem, from which place the messengers alluded to had come. In several places in the Acts of the Apostles we find the view of James's position in the Church at Jerusalem, thus incidentally set forth in these words, most circumstantially and expressly confirmed. When Peter was miraculously delivered from prison, he met his friends in the house of Mark, and after relating the circumstances attending his deliverance said, "Go show these things unto James, and to the brethren" (Acts xii 17). James is also spoken of in terms of distinction in chap xiii 17 and 18, while in the debate which occurred regarding the necessity of circumcising Gentile converts, the most conspicuous part is played by him, and his decision unanimously adopted by the assembly called together.

In the third chapter of the Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, verse 1, we have these words "Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you?" These words show that some persons had come to the Corinthian Church with letters of commendation from other Churches. Now if we turn to Acts xviii 27 we find these words "And when he (Apollos) was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him"

These samples, being culled at random, are by no means of the best kind. But yet they set forth the nature of the masterly argument which Paley has marshalled in favour of the veracity of the Acts and the Epistles of St. Paul. You cannot master it without reading the excellent book in which it is presented in all its breadth, cogency, and conclusiveness, and I can assure you that there are not many books in the English language which will more thoroughly repay a careful perusal than Dr. Paley's *Horæ Paulinæ*.

Let me advance a step farther, and state that the grand argument elaborated in *Horæ Paulinæ* has been applied to all the books of the Old and New Testament by Mr. Blunt, in a treatise which, in perspicuity of style, transparency of thought, and strength of argument, is not inferior to the best works of Paley.

The truth of all the historical books of the Old and New Testaments may be established by the innumerable instances of coincidence without design with which they, and the writings associated with them, are fraught. It is not necessary for me to tread this vast field, my object being to set forth the authenticity of the New Testament rather than that of the whole Bible. Let me therefore present a few instances of undesigned coincidences, fitted to prove the veracity of Gospel history in the fourfold aspect in which it is presented in the New Testament.

In Matthew xiv 1, 2, we have these words "At that time

Herod the Tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, and *said unto his servants*, This is John the Baptist, he is risen from the dead" Now, why did Herod speak unto his servants in the way indicated? Mark does not enable us to answer this question, he simply relates the fact as Matthew does Luke even, when recording this identical saying of Herod, does not enable us to account for that monarch's making his servants his counsellors in this matter

That Evangelist, however, mentions casually in the eighth chapter of his Gospel what clearly and beautifully explains the mystery He says that Jesus "went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God, and the twelve were with Him, and certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities Mary, called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, and *Joanna, the wife of Chusa, Herod's steward*, and Susanna, and many others" From this bit of information, incidentally communicated, it appears that Herod, having heard "many things" about Jesus from his servants, expressed his opinion about the resurrection of John the Baptist in their hearing

This verse also explains how the synoptists obtained the different items of the information they give in their graphic accounts of the execution of John the Baptist

In Matthew xxvi 67, 68, we have these words "Then did they spit in His face, and buffeted Him, and others smote Him with the palms of their hands, saying, *Prophecy unto us, Thou Christ, Who is he that smote Thee?*" Why did they ask Him to prophesy when the striker was before Him? Now this question can be settled only when we consult Luke, who says "that the men that held Jesus blindfolded Him." Jesus was blindfolded, and therefore He was asked to set forth His Divine knowledge by pointing out the man by whom He had been smitten Had not the history of

this event been true, and widely known, Matthew would not have left his account in its present unfinished and confused state

I will present one instance more In John ii 7, Christ says, "*Fill the water-pots with water*" Now, why were there so many water-pots in the house wherein the marriage feast, honoured by Christ's presence, was held? And why were these water-pots empty? John, who only narrates this first of Christ's miracles, does not enable us to answer these questions The other Evangelists, however, casually refer to a custom of the Jews fitted to furnish the explanation needed Mark, for instance, says, "all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders" For such ablution many water-pots were needed in the feast, and because the guests had done with washing their hands and were engaged in eating, these big vessels were empty Such coincidences, minute yet undesigned, scattered over the several books of the New Testament, are indubitable proofs of their veracity

IV —THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF A SUCCESSFUL ATTEMPT TO FORGE A BOOK LIKE THE NEW TESTAMENT, OR TO TAMPER WITH ITS SACRED TEXT

A wholesale forgery, like that supposed by critics who represent the different books of the New Testament as having been written in post-apostolic times, and falsely ascribed to the parties whose names they bear, was morally impossible The difficulties attending such an attempt must have been not merely of a formidable, but absolutely of an insuperable character Suppose an attempt were made to forge one entire book, and add it as one of canonical authority to the Koran, what would be the consequence? Would not the entire Mohammedan world rise up as one man, and stigmatise it as daringly impious?

Would not the whole machinery of Mohammedan power be set in motion to bring the offenders to justice and neutralise their impious proceeding?

Now it is a matter of fact that the various books of the New Testament were added to those of the Old Testament as works of equal authority. If these books had been forgeries, would not the Jewish converts have risen up as one man to resist their admission to the sacred canon? The Jews had as much reverence for their sacred Scriptures as the Mussulmans have for their Koran, and Jewish converts did not yield to their countrymen in their veneration for these books.

Again, the Jewish element predominated in all the Churches planted by the Apostles in Palestine, and before the composition and circulation of the New Testament, the Old Testament was read in these houses of worship as regularly and as solemnly as in the synagogues. Now is it conceivable that these Churches, composed as they mainly were of Jews, whose iron conservatism was so decidedly opposed to the liberal spirit of Christianity, would have unanimously received a book as of equal authority with those to which they had been accustomed from their childhood to look up as the oracles of God, without a thorough and searching investigation?

And if it was morally impossible for them thus to receive a single book without a close and scrutinising examination, are we to suppose that they added, one after another, no less than twenty-seven separate books to their sacred canon without the slightest inquiry as to their genuineness and authenticity? Are we to suppose that, though scattered over a wide extent of territory, they got up a general and widespread conspiracy to admit to their old and venerable canon as many spurious books as could possibly be forged by persons determined to mislead them? If you could entertain either of these preposterous suppositions, you

at least ought to have no difficulty in believing in a miracle !

Not only was anything like a wholesale forgery, but even a considerable corruption of the sacred text of the New Testament was morally impossible. It is plain that the New Testament could not be materially altered either by excision or by interpolation during the lifetime of its authors. They, you may be sure, would not be silent spectators of an act of desecration fitted to pervert the truth, which they preached amid persecution and suffering, and for which they were ready to give up their lives. They and their coadjutors would be the first persons to detect and condemn any unwarrantable liberties which individuals, or even associations, might take with the text of books they presented to the world as the oracles of God. They were a set of itinerant preachers, and with the help of those whom they appointed as pastors and evangelists, they placed the numerous Churches, which sprung into existence in consequence of their labour of love, under their control so decidedly, that an attempt to interpolate the books they delivered as inspired writings could not possibly succeed.

Nor could an attempt at interpolation succeed after the death of the Apostles. Even during their lifetime the manuscripts of the New Testament were almost indefinitely multiplied, and scattered broadcast over the whole Christian world. Within thirty years after the death of Christ—that is, within the lifetime of the Apostles—flourishing Churches were reared, even according to heathen testimony, in all the great cities and towns of the Roman Empire, and Christianity attained a conspicuous position among the religions of the civilised world. The vast number of the manuscripts circulated, and the almost interminable area over which they were scattered, placed a successful corruption of the text beyond the bounds of possibility. A few manuscripts in particular localities, or among particular peoples, might

be interpolated, but a universal corruption of the entire mass of manuscripts, scattered over a prodigiously wide extent of territory, was an impossibility.

Again, the Church in post-apostolic times was divided into a vast number divisions and factions, which carried on a sort of internecine warfare with one another. How could a general combination, such as was needed to ensure a successful mutilation of the sacred writings, be got up amid the denominational broils by which the Church was distracted? The books, moreover, were generally read in the churches—not kept concealed in some secret, unapproachable place by a designing priesthood. Had they been thus concealed, or only open to the inspection of interested parties, a successful attempt at interpolation might have been made. But sacred books almost daily read in the churches could not obviously be tampered with.

Again, if a conspiracy of the nature demanded by the necessities of the case could be conjured up, if the different denominations into which the Church was divided could be persuaded to forget their differences and dissensions in a general attempt to corrupt the text of their sacred Scriptures, would not the many sects of heretics, which flourished side by side with them, have publicly stigmatised the attempt as daringly sacrilegious? Would they not have gladly availed themselves of so precious an opportunity of wreaking their vengeance on that Church which had ruthlessly excluded them from its communion?

Again, suppose the heretics were persuaded to cast in their lot with the denominations by which they had been relentlessly excommunicated in this matter, would not the witchful and determined adversaries of the Church have gladly seized so golden an opportunity of bringing the new faith into contempt? Would not so glaring a forgery have been made use of by the enemies of Christianity to damage the reputation and endanger the interests of a religion

which had absolutely nothing but its moral power to ensure its spread and prevalence? The vast number of the manuscripts scattered, the extent of territory overrun by the new faith, the divisions of the Church, the attitude of heretical sects, and the implacable animosity of enemies like Celsus—these, combined with the fact that the different books of the New Testament were read in all Christian places of worship along with those of the Old Testament, made a general mutilation of their sacred text an impossibility. Such a corruption, in the teeth of all these deterrent circumstances, would itself be a miracle.

Infidel writers are in the habit of dwelling with an air of triumph upon the numerous various readings found in the New Testament. You are aware that our sacred books were, when the art of printing was unknown, circulated through the medium of manuscripts, and, though these were written with the greatest care, they could not entirely avoid slight and inconsiderable errors of transcription. The result of these inevitable errors is a vast number of various readings. It is affirmed by learned commentators, those who like Griesbach have collated a large number of manuscripts, that there are no less than a hundred and fifty thousand such readings in the New Testament. The number is doubtless large, and at first sight it may stagger the faith of pious people in the Church as well as add to the triumph of its adversaries. But a little consideration converts the formidable giant into a contemptible pigmy.

The various readings, on which infidelity plumes itself, do not affect a single fact chronicled, or doctrine inculcated, in the New Testament. They do not in the slightest degree alter the prominent features of our faith, any more than the small and almost invisible particles of dust floating in the air affect the rays of the sun. Our belief that the Bible has come down to us substantially as it was written is consistent with our fearless admission that slight verbal errors did

creep into the text, in consequence of the frequency with which it was copied, before the art of printing was utilised. We believe that our sacred books have been, miraculously as well as in the ordinary way, preserved from such mutilation as is the result of unscrupulous excision and interpolation, but our faith is not equal to the admission of a perpetual miracle, such as was necessary to render even slight errors of transcription impossible.

Let us further observe that the New Testament does not present a single mark of spuriousness. Michaelis lays down the following marks by which spurious works may be distinguished from such as are genuine.

“1 When doubts have been entertained, from the first appearance, whether it (a particular work) was the work of a reputed author

“2 When the immediate friends of the author have denied it to be his

“3 When a long series of years has elapsed, after his death, in which the book was unknown, and in which it must have been mentioned or quoted had it been in existence

“4 When the style is different from his other writings, or, in case no other writings remain, from what might be reasonably expected

“5 When events are recorded which appeared later than the time of the pretended author

“6 When opinions are advanced contradictory to those which he is known to have advanced in other writings”

Of these marks of spuriousness not one is discoverable in our sacred writings. The books were received as genuine from their first appearance. The immediate friends of the authors not only represented them as genuine, but did their best to maintain their authority and spread their influence. Not a single day passed after their death when they were not read and quoted as the very oracles of God. No event

is recorded in them which occurred after the death of the authors. The style is exactly what might be reasonably expected from them, while not a single opinion is advanced inconsistent with their known sentiment and feelings.

The worthies who loudly represent our sacred books as spurious or mutilated do not condescend to reason, they come forward, either like German freethinkers, with a number of plausible theories, or like Mussulmans, with a number of bold but gratuitous assumptions.

A simple reference to the Mohammedan standpoint in this controversy is enough to show the futility of the objections arrayed against the integrity of the New Testament Canon. Mussulmans confidently affirm that our books have been sadly mutilated, that the teachings of Christ have been daringly tampered with, and that the doctrines of Christianity, as they were taught by its Great Founder, are travestied rather than correctly represented by the Church in these degenerate times.

But suppose you ask them to state when, where, and how the work of mutilation was accomplished, they coolly reply that, though they cannot answer such searching questions, they are sure the text has been corrupted. Again, suppose you ask them to produce the original copies of which our books are mutilated editions, they coolly reply that, though they cannot do that, their assertion is indisputable! These searching questions ought to silence, not only our Mussulman opponents, but those more intelligent adversaries of Christianity who, under the banner of historical criticism, pile up theory on theory with a view to overturn established facts.

Let us conclude this lecture with the remark that the genuineness, authenticity, and integrity of the New Testament are established by a body of external and internal evidence more voluminous, more powerful, and more triumphantly conclusive than any that can be marshalled

in favour of the claims of any other book that has come down to us from ancient times And it is a noticeable fact that the present irresistible momentum, so to speak, of this vast mass of evidence is the outcome or result of infidel attack The great champions of infidelity have made the evidence in favour of the claims of our sacred books the butt of their most vehement and persistent attacks, but every attack of theirs has only tended to increase its volume and augment its power And at present its proportions are so magnificent, and its nature so invulnerable, that infidel writers have given up in despair their time-hallowed tactics, and betaken themselves to the less injurious, but more specious, work of theorising By setting aside direct attacks, they are, as I have already hinted, trying to undermine its influence over sober minds by dreaming of mythological and legendary embellishments and decorations We shall have, before long, to refer to these theories, meanwhile, we content ourselves with the remark that the coolness with which historical evidence of the most irrefragable kind is ignored in these showy speculations should be construed into an acknowledgment of defeat !

VII.

THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST.

THE miracles of Christ are unique of their kind Their prominent characteristics separate them by a sharp line of demarcation from the mass of false miracles embedded in the mythology of the world They are not wild and extravagant in their nature, capricious and puerile in their details, and ludicrously absurd in their consequences They are acts of mercy, not mad freaks of power, and they are chaste in their character, congruous and reasonable in their details, and beneficial in their results They are obviously works of God, worthy as well of His power and benevolence as of the important occasions which led to their performance, and they are eminently fitted to generate in the human mind the salutary convictions they are designed to produce They partake, decidedly and fully, of the originality of Christ's character and Christ's teaching The peculiar excellencies of Christ's unique character separate Him completely from the originators and founders of the so-called religions which are of the earth, earthy

The depth, comprehensiveness, and benign influences of the morality taught by Christ open, as it were, a gulf impassable between it and all the ethical systems which have been elaborated and propounded by man since the beginning of the world There is a glorious stamp of individuality noticeable in the sublime character of Christ

and His inimitable moral teaching Now this marvellous originality is stamped with equal clearness on the miracles of Christ

Place the miracles of Christ in juxtaposition with those embodied in heathen mythology, and their fitness to set forth the power of God and the glory of His attributes will be apparent. You are thoroughly conversant with the grotesque and extravagant nature of the miracles recorded in the religious books of Hindustan

You know how the celebrated monkey-god of the *Ramajana* brought millions of mountains at a time—a mountain on the tip of each hair of his body—to cast into the sea, and thereby construct a bridge between Rameshwar and Ceylon, how Priyavrat drew his huge chariot seven times, making by its wheel-marks seven concentric oceans, how the great sage Agastya drank one of these illimitable oceans at three sips, and the way in which he discharged it again, how Krishna balanced a huge mountain on the tip of one of his little fingers for some days, to protect the inhabitants of Gokul from rain, how Siva, in an evil hour, cut off one of Brahma's four heads with his thumb-nail, and being cursed by that god, could not disengage the separated head from his hand, how gods who had shown their irresistible might in outrageous miracles were suddenly made powerless by the imprecations of their worshippers, how irascible sages converted powerful deities into venomous reptiles by their omnipotent curses. The moment you read these wild and extravagant legends, you are led instinctively to believe that they are the mere creations of a diseased imagination, and that they cannot possibly have a foundation in truth

When some well-attested historical facts are placed side by side with a number of myths and legends, their historic importance becomes visible by contrast, and so when the chaste, reasonable, and benevolent miracles of Christ are

placed in juxtaposition with the unreasonable and monstrous miracles embalmed in heathen mythology, their fitness to set forth the power and glory of God will be apparent.

Again, the miracles of Christ are distinguished from those embodied in heathen mythology, not only by their chaste and rational character, but by their undoubted historic importance. The wild and extravagant miracles recorded in the so-called religious books of the world are accompanied by circumstances which stamp a decidedly fabulous character upon them. Their scene is laid in prehistoric times—in those dark ages of the history of the world which are, properly speaking, *terra incognita* to the historian, and from which even the plodding archæologist can bring out little in the shape of fact that is worthy of credence.

They appear dissociated from such circumstantial details as may enable us to fix their dates, or, in many cases, even to ascertain the localities wherein they were wrought. They were promulgated, through the influence of a dominant hierarchy or a ruling aristocracy, among superstitious peoples and subject races. They were, moreover, wrought in support of existing and predominant religions, not in attestation of a new faith, the success of which depended mainly on their truth.

These circumstances, which bring their unreliable character into prominence, separate them by a sharp line of demarcation from the stupendous miracles recorded in the Gospels. These were wrought in a civilised and enlightened age, the main features of which are brought to light, not by the dim and flickering lamp of tradition and mythology, but by the bright torch of history. They are associated with circumstantial details such as enable us to fix their dates with certainty, and stamp an indubitably historical character on them. They were promulgated, not by an all-powerful priesthood or an influential nobility, but by a handful of fishermen and peasants who were destitute of wealth and

influence, and who had to face and overcome the most determined and persevering opposition of the whole world. And, finally, they were wrought in attestation of a new faith, the success of which mainly depended on their truth, a faith which would undoubtedly have been nipped in the bud if they had been senseless fables, not incontestable facts !

Let us now point out in order a few of the circumstances, which not merely stamp a historic character on the miracles of Christ, but make all mistake about them on the part of the witnesses an impossibility. We affirm that the miraculous story, with which the doctrines of our religion are inseparably associated, presents certain peculiar features which not merely separate them by a broad line of distinction from all other miraculous stories, but makes the assumption of its falsehood on the part of the infidel obviously and ludicrously absurd. We affirm, moreover, that they were events regarding which the witnesses, whoever they were, could not possibly be mistaken. These assertions will appear reasonable when we take into consideration the following facts regarding the miracles of Christ.

1 The vast number of the miracles of Christ is a guarantee of their truth and genuineness. The prominent miracles, of which detailed accounts are given in the Gospels, are about fifty in number. Add to these the innumerable miracles which are grouped in such declarations as the following, "And they brought *all* that were sick, and He healed them," and you have a vast number of signs and wonders before you.

An impostor may try to impose upon the credulity of a mob by attempting a miracle or two, or by performing a few solitary feats of legerdemain, but no sensible impostor can be named who has hazarded his reputation and endangered his cause by attempting so many miracles in

so many places and under such varieties of circumstances. The greater the number of false miracles attempted, the more numerous are the chances of a speedy detection of the fraud practised, or the imposture concealed beneath what may be called their drapery, and, therefore, false thaumaturgists whose reputation has not been of the most transient character, have confined their tricks to a few scattered and solitary wonders

In this country, occasionally, wonder-workers spring up like mushrooms, and endeavour to impose upon the credulity of our superstitious countrymen by scattering miracles right and left, but their success is momentary, and they sink into the obscurity from which they jump into prominence in a day, and are ever afterwards referred to as cheats and rogues of the first water. Had Christ been an impostor, and followed the example of such foolish miracle-workers, His name would have perished some time before His death. Had He been a sensible and clever pretender He would have confined His wonder-working skill to a few solitary cases, and not staked His reputation on a number large enough to lead to a speedy detection of the imposture concealed. The fact of His attempting such a large number of wonders is fitted to show that He was neither a foolish nor a wise impostor; that He was a messenger of God, conscious of superhuman power; and that the stupendous works by means of which He attested His Divine commission were genuine miracles.

2. Consider, in the second place, the striking variety of the miracles of Christ. Impostors who have the slightest regard to their reputation confine their efforts not only to a few wonders, but to one species of miracles. They know very well that the greater the number of individual attempts they make, and the greater the variety of the wondrous works they perform, the more numerous are the chances of detection. They therefore adopt the judicious policy of

confining their skill to a few solitary wonders, and to only one species of miracles

Christ, however, pursued a very different course, and, instead of confining His efforts to a few wonders, or one species of miracles, He signalled His career by stupendous works which, in number and variety, are fitted to place His claims as a messenger of God endowed with superhuman power above suspicion. The miracles He wrought were of various kinds, ranging from the instantaneous cure of an ordinary fever up to the stiling of the tempest and the raising of the dead by appropriate words of command. He healed all manner of diseases, curing directly, and independently of all efficacious means, persons afflicted with congenital blindness, incurable deafness and dumbness combined, paralytic strokes, withered limbs, inveterate maladies of the stomach and the abdomen.

Nor were the miraculous cures He attempted, of what Paley calls a *tentative* character, a few successful, but the majority unsuccessful, as all pseudo miraculous cures attempted by impostors are. The cures He effected were instantaneous, complete, and glorious, and nothing like failure appeared to set any limits to His mighty power. All varieties of diseases were subject to His control, and disappeared at His bidding. But not only were diseases subject to His control, but death itself opened its ghastly jaws, and disgorged its victims in obedience to His almighty fiat. On three different occasions the dead heard His voice and lived, while He frustrated the rage of His murderers by bursting the bands of death, and triumphantly coming out of the grave, in which they had fondly expected to see the grand object of His mission crushed and locked up for ever.

But not only were diseases of the most inveterate type, and death itself, the king of terrors, subject to His control, but even the elements obeyed His command. He caused

a tree covered with beautiful foliage to be withered in the twinkling of the eye, commanded the waters to be solidified under the tread of His feet, and rebuked the raging sea into a calm. Never in the history of the world did an impostor attempt so many and such varieties of miracles as were displayed to set forth the Divinity concealed in our Lord's person ! Some of Christ's miracles were of a nature never attempted by an impostor. Has the world ever heard of an impostor feeding five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes ?

3 The greatness of our Lord's miracles is fitted to show that they are free from all tinge of fraud or imposture. Impostors never try to impose upon the credulity of men by means of great tricks, such tricks being calculated, in consequence of their marked improbability, to invite investigation, which it is their secret design to repel. Small tricks, such as are not fitted to outrage our sense of probability, and thereby elicit inquiry and call forth opposition, are the weapons with which impostors march to victory and renown.

But our Lord did not stand in need of the caution, dexterity, and cunning with which such persons carry on their nefarious trade. His miracles were real, and of a striking and glorious character. Even the smallest of them have an air of magnificence about them, and cannot possibly be accounted for except by a pointed reference to power Divine. The miraculous cures He effected, though often counterfeited by impostors and cheats, had something *extraordinary and glorious about them, the diseases healed* being of an inveterate, malignant, and incurable type, and the means utilised being wholly inadequate to the ends compassed. In the cures, which have never been attempted with anything like considerable or permanent success by lying prophets, in works of such dazzling splendour that impostors never dream of attempting them, we see a power

displayed which scepticism itself cannot help representing as Divine. And therefore all attempts to explain the stupendous miracles of Christ on what is called the natural theory, to reduce their magnificent proportions till they dwindle into ordinary events, have signally and even ludicrously failed. The number, the variety, and the greatness of the miracles wrought by our Lord make it impossible for us to confound them with those tricks and impositions by which superstitious peoples have been gulled in all ages and countries.

4 Let us now consider the grand objects of our Lord's miracles. The design of Christ's miracles was in every respect worthy of the Divine power displayed in them. That design was twofold. The primary object of these wonders was to usher in a new dispensation of religion, one fitted to mature and perfect the initiatory truths and crude ideas of a preparatory economy. That a new revelation can neither be given nor attested except by miracles is an axiomatic truth. Christ could not usher in a new economy or reveal new truths without the help of the stupendous works by which He proved His commission as a teacher sent by God.

It ought also to be remembered that Christ not merely gave the finishing stroke to the initiatory dispensation which terminated in Him, but revealed novel truths and novel ideas, such as took the world by surprise, and such as could not possibly be propagated except by means of works fitted to display the power and intervention of God in a signal and convincing way. Christ proved His Divine commission by a series of stupendous miracles, and was thereby authorised to command men, under what might be called the apparent sanction of heaven, to accept the message He delivered.

But Christ's miracles had a secondary as well as a primary object. To relieve human misery was their

secondary, as to attest a fresh and important chapter of revelation was their primary aim. He displayed not merely the dazzling effulgence of Divine power, but the serene, mellow lustre of Divine benevolence. His miracles were, as a rule, works of superhuman mercy as well as works of superhuman power. He healed the sick, raised the dead, fed the hungry, and preached glad tidings to the meek, and He thereby realised in Himself the portraiture of the Messiah drawn by the pencil of prophecy centuries before His advent.

Sometimes He worked His miracles of mercy in compliance with supplications and entreaties flowing from the lips of the afflicted persons or their friends. He healed the Centurion's servant in answer to his prayer, raised the Ruler's dead daughter to life at his request, and gave eyes to blind Bartimæus in consequence of his loud and persevering cries.

But oftener did our Lord perform His stupendous works of mercy unasked. He anxiously watched for opportunities of doing good, and did not postpone the execution of His benevolent purposes till He was entreated and importuned. He passes by a pool, sees an infirm man unable to avail himself of the medicinal virtue occasionally infused into the water by angelic influence, and, moved by compassion, asks if he is willing to be healed. He thus gives him an opportunity of telling his sad tale, and then commands him to take up his bed and walk. The result is an instantaneous and glorious cure, the poor forlorn man springing up, rolling and shouldering his bed, and marching forward, a living monument of Divine power and Divine mercy!

Christ enters a city, and behold a funeral procession marches, slowly and sadly, behind a coffin containing the remains of a young man, the only son of a helpless widow. The doleful lamentations of the desolate and disconsolate mother touch His tender heart and move His boundless

compassion He stands unasked, orders the procession to halt, commands the young man to arise, and restores the lost treasure to the bereaved mother The miracles of Christ were miracles of mercy as well as miracles of power!

5 The disposition of the parties before whom these mighty works were done should be taken into consideration Christ did not work His miracles in the midst of friends, who might be naturally disposed to allow His stupendous claims without inquiry, and mistake His ordinary deeds for wonders He worked them before men who were disposed to look upon Him, not only as an impostor, but as a formidable enemy to the clearest hopes and aspirations of their humbled nationality, and who therefore regarded His person and claims with an antipathy which was both patriotic and religious The persons among whom He lived and moved were, in plain English, His sworn enemies, and they watched His movements, criticised His words, and scrutinised His deeds, with a hostility which was alike keen and virulent Every word He spoke, every thing He did, was subjected to a censorship, compared to which that extended by the modern Press over statesmen and diplomatists is mere sport, and if He had had the temerity to attempt an imposture, its detection and His punishment would have followed with the certainty of a law of nature

Christians in these days may be prepossessed in His favour, so as to be willing to swallow any number of myths and fables which may be manufactured to set forth His glory, but those who try to build upon such prepossession an argument against Christian miracles forget that they were wrought before and accepted as genuine by persons implacably prejudiced against Him Christ's peculiar circumstances made even a single successful imposture on His part an impossibility, and if you believe that He made by some unknown mysterious power hosts of His sworn enemies to

believe that He had wrought multitudes of stupendous miracles under their eyes when He had not actually worked even one, you believe in a miracle !

6 The manner in which the miracles of Christ were wrought is itself an argument in favour of their genuineness. They were, in the first place, wrought openly and publicly, and there was not the slightest attempt made at concealment. The magician invariably displays his wonders amid circumstances which conceal what may be called the *modus operandi* from public view, and tricks of legerdemain are obviously performed by sleights of hand. You see a clever juggler planting a mango stone and causing a small but beautiful mango tree with ripe fruits in its branches to sprout out of it in the twinkling of an eye, but the whole operation is begun and consummated behind a veil ! You see another member of the well-known fraternity thrusting a dagger, right and left, apparently into the body of a brother juggler, and bringing it out reeking with blood, but the wounded man is concealed in a basket !

All false miracles and deceptive wonders, all tricks and impostures, have some secrecy about them. The miracles of our Lord had none. They were wrought, not in sequestered places and dark cells, not under a basket or behind a veil, but openly and publicly in the streets of populous cities and thriving towns, on occasions of public festivity, in synagogues crowded with devout worshippers, generally before innumerable hosts of spectators, and invariably without the slightest recourse to that studied secrecy behind which the skill of the magician is always entrenched.

Then, again, the miracles of Christ were performed with remarkable directness and simplicity of manner. You are aware of the varieties of tricks resorted to by practised jugglers to render their feats dazzling, you are aware of the music they give, the songs they sing, the incantations they

mutter, the vulgar witticisms, the ludicrous grimaces, and the frantic dances with which they try to amuse the spectators, and draw off their attention from all that may lead to a detection of the imposture practised. Christ never condescended to resort to these questionable and ignoble tricks. His miracles were performed with the simplicity, grace, and dignity which we find stamped on the works of nature. He effected His cures either with or without a word, and the means He for wise purposes sometimes employed were free from all tinge of fanaticism, extravagance, or studied cunning.

Observe, moreover, that Christ did not perform His miracles in a vain, ostentatious manner. He went about doing good, and performed His great works of mercy *incidentally*, as suitable occasions were presented, and without any regard to personal interests. He did not wait for grand occasions and splendid opportunities, and He systematically and studiously avoided all ostentation and fame. This is an indubitable mark of sincerity and honesty, as impostors invariably practise their tricks under circumstances fitted to heighten their reputation and spread their fame.

Observe also what has been hinted at, the perfect disinterestedness with which the miracles of Christ were wrought. When He sent His disciples to preach the Gospel and work miracles, He commanded them to give *freely* as they had received *freely*. In this, as in many other respects, He was their Model and Exemplar. He never sold His miracles, or worked them with a view to gain some selfish end, or secure some temporal advantage. He exerted His miraculous powers in behalf of suffering humanity, without the slightest intention either of surrounding His person with the coveted blessings of wealth, or of encircling His brow with the halo of fame and glory. The open, simple, unostentatious, and disinterested manner in which Christ wrought His grand miracles, is enough of itself to prove that He was

not an impostor, and that His stupendous works should not be confounded with feats of jugglery and tricks of legerdemain

7 Consider, moreover, the permanence of the effects of Christ's miracles. The persons cured lived and moved as living monuments of His stupendous power. The healed eyes of the blind, the restored limbs of the maimed, the renovated bodies of the persons afflicted with leprosy, the revived arms of the withered and the restored strength of the palsied, showed forth His Divine might, not merely on the occasions when the miracles were wrought, but as long as the persons on whose behalf they were wrought lived subsequent to their cure.

The persons raised from the dead did not appear as apparitions, and then return to the gloomy regions, from which they had been summoned back, but they lived, and showed in their resuscitated lives a power scarcely less striking than that displayed in acts of creation. The tricks of jugglery literally die as soon as they are exhibited, but the miracles of Christ lived, in an important sense, inasmuch as their effects not merely survived Him, but appeared in all their glorious completeness long after His death.

But the permanence of what may be called the physical effects of Christ's miracles is nothing compared to the permanence of their moral results. In consequence of these stupendous events many persons of all ages and both sexes have believed in Him, forsaken their relations and friends, together with the comforts with which they were surrounded, chose a life of ignominy and reproach, abandoned themselves to misery in some of its most aggravated forms, systematically run counter to the dearest wishes and aspirations of their hearts, placed themselves under the control of a rigid system of morality, braved persecutions of an appalling character, and ultimately sealed their testimony

with their blood What juggler has ever seen his skill followed by such glorious moral results?

8 Lastly, let us observe the significant fact that none of Christ's contemporaries denied the reality or genuineness of His miracles False miracles are admitted by a few, but denied by many How many sensible people in India believe in the fictitious cures which are said to be daily effected in the purlieus of some holy shrines? For every man that has faith in them you can bring forward a hundred who look upon and represent them as disreputable tricks. The pseudo-miracles, by means of which Roman Catholic priests try to perpetuate their influence over superstitious devotees, are stock themes of merriment and laughter among enlightened peoples in and out of Christendom Impostors never succeed in commanding universal and implicit credence

But Christ's miracles did command universal belief Nobody, not even the bitterest enemy of our Lord, ever ventured to call in question their reality The proud and bigoted Pharisees joined the sceptical Sadducees, the rich concurred with the poor, the Jews vied with the Gentiles in admitting the reality and genuineness of the wonders displayed They puzzled their heads and exhausted their patience in concocting theories fitted to explain them away, or to neutralise the conclusions they were calculated to substantiate.

Had these miracles been false, with what eagerness, with what unutterable feelings of joy, would they have come forward to expose the imposture associated with them, and thereby convert the popular applause at times lavished on our Lord into implacable hate! The circumstances indicated above, viz, that no attempt was made to bring the miracles of Christ into contempt by a timely exposure of whatever imposture might be associated with them, that their genuineness was admitted by His bitterest enemies,

and that it was deemed sufficient to invalidate His claims by attributing them to demoniac power and influence—these circumstances proved them to be undeniable and stubborn facts, which it would have been downright madness on their part to have questioned¹

These marks of genuineness in the miracles of Christ separate them by a sharp line of demarcation from the lying wonders embalmed in heathen mythology. The peculiar nature and salient features of the stupendous works of Christ are a *prima facie* argument in favour of their genuineness and Divine origin, while the ludicrous and impure elements of the marvels from which they must be discriminated are a *prima facie* argument in favour of their false character and human origin. The miracles of Christ bear the unmistakable impress of the seal of heaven, while those against which they are balanced bear on their faces, so to speak, the equally unmistakable impress of the seal of this world. The miracles of Christ are obviously of heaven, heavenly, while the so called miracles arrayed in favour of false religions are obviously of the earth, earthy.

Let it also be observed that the miracles of Christ differ from those associated with false religions, not only in the indubitable marks of genuineness stamped upon them, but in their deep moral significance. The miracles embodied in heathen mythology do not serve a worthy purpose, and are moreover meaningless. They are not wrought in attestation of a new revelation or a fresh development of what may be called a standing revelation, and they are not symbolical acts fraught with deep spiritual meaning.

The miracles of Christ were wrought in support of truths and doctrines which completed the magnificent arch of Divine revelation, and they are symbols pregnant with deep spiritual significance. Every miracle wrought by Christ, whether a work of mercy or a mere exhibition of

power Divine, was an act which symbolised some spiritual truth, or some prominent feature of the great work He came to accomplish

When He healed men afflicted with congenital blindness, He not merely performed a work of mercy, not merely displayed His Divine power, but referred by an expressive type to that worse species of blindness which He had come to heal—the congenital blindness of the soul. When He unstopped the ears that had never heard, or opened tongues that had never spoken, He symbolically represented people who, under the plastic influences of His Spirit, would hear the sweet notes of salvation which had never penetrated into their ears, and sing the songs of praise which had never escaped their sealed lips. And when, amid the din and turmoil of a dreadful tempest, He rebuked the raging sea into a lull, He pointedly referred to that storm of passions in the human heart which His sweet name soothes and charms into a durable and heavenly calm.

The typical nature of Christ's miracles, their fitness to represent and symbolise spiritual truth of the last importance to man, will become apparent when we consider these wonders one by one. But such a detailed treatment of the subject is incompatible with the limits which we must prescribe to ourselves in this discourse, and is, moreover, not at all necessary. With a view to set forth the symbolic character of the miracles of Christ, let us group them in three different classes. In the following paragraphs we follow the guidance of Hill, as in the foregoing ones we have followed that of Horne.

1 The miraculous cures effected by Christ of varieties of bodily diseases were fitted to set forth His power to heal the varieties of mental and moral diseases with which humanity is afflicted. The effects of sin are both visible and invisible, palpable and impalpable, developed and latent, and of these two classes of results the one symbolises the other,

that is, the consequences which are developed, and therefore visible and tangible, typify those which are latent, and therefore invisible and intangible

The untold varieties of bodily maladies which flesh is heir to are among the most affecting of the obvious and appalling consequences of sin, and among the benevolent projects which extort the admiration and applause of mankind, none are more glorious and more justly eulogised than those which have for their object a timely mitigation of the pain and misery inflicted upon man by disease in its various ghastly forms. But these maladies of the body are expressive symbols of those diseases of the soul which are infinitely more frightful, more permanent, and more virulent and destructive

Now, Christ came especially to heal these latent and unseen maladies of the soul, the hideous and grisly forms of spiritual disorganisation before which bodily diseases of the most malignant type dwindle into insignificance. And therefore it was both desirable and appropriate that He should inaugurate His great work of spiritual restoration amid cures fitted to call attention, as well to the existence of untold varieties of moral disease as to His power to heal them. He Himself connected these two classes of cures by assuring some of His patients that their sins were pardoned when, in consequence of His healing power, their diseases were instantaneously cured. The miraculous cures He effected were, therefore, pregnant with deep spiritual meaning, being very well adapted to reveal Him as the Great Physician of souls

2 The miracles of which raving demoniacs were the subjects are also symbols pregnant with spiritual meaning. The malignant spirits of the lower regions, who have always exerted a mighty and pernicious influence over the inner man, were for wise purposes permitted to injure the bodies and minds, as well as the souls, of human beings

The effects of demoniacal possession or influence were in those days visible and tangible, as well as unseen and impalpable. Under this disastrous influence persons had to groan under various types of bodily disease and mental disorganisation, some had falls something like those occasioned by epileptic fits, some became deaf and dumb, some passed through seasons of temporary, but on the whole harmless, insanity, and some became so furiously and violently mad that it was absolutely impossible to hold them bound even by means of hard chains. To the existence of these varieties of physical and mental evils occasioned by demoniac influence, as well as to the horrible nature of the sufferings proceeding from them, abundant testimony is borne even by non-Christian writers of those times

Christ came avowedly to destroy the works of the devil, and it was both desirable and appropriate that He should commence His great work by sensibly neutralising the visible effects of the malignant influences emanating from hell. The miraculous cures of which demoniacs were the subjects could not but make a deep impression upon His contemporaries, and point Him out as the Great Saviour destined to deliver the world, not only from the physical evils inflicted upon it by the Father of Lies, but from the more disastrous consequences of his moral sway. In removing by simple fiat of omnipotence all varieties of bodily and mental disease, whether occasioned by demoniac influence or developed in the ordinary way, He showed His power to annihilate the unseen effects of sin by neutralising its visible, but far less appalling, consequences.

3 Nor were the stupendous miracles which resulted in persons dead and gone being raised to life again destitute of deep spiritual significance. Death is most decidedly the most formidable and ghastly of the innumerable forms of suffering and distress which are the fruits of sin. But

physical death is but a symbol of an evil the magnitude of which human language fails to set forth, an evil compared to which what is justly called the king of terrors is an angel of mercy. The death manifested in the violent flight of the soul from the body betokens our separation from God, and foreshadows that eternal and ever-increasing punishment which in Scripture is illustrated by the worm that never dies and the fire that is never quenched.

Now Christ came to triumph over this more durable, more formidable, and infinitely more agonising death, and it was both desirable and appropriate that He should begin His labour of love by setting forth, in ways striking and magnificent, His control over that bodily death by which it is symbolised. Christ, by liberating some persons from the power of death, showed triumphantly that not only were diseases of the most virulent type, not only were the varieties of evils inflicted by demoniac malice on fallen man, but the king of terrors himself was obedient to His command. And when, ignominiously slain, He was put in a new sepulchre wherein no man had ever been laid, He burst asunder the bars of the grave, came out victorious, leading captivity captive, and thereby showed His power to control and neutralise that dire and unutterable calamity of which bodily death is but a feeble symbol.

The miracles of Christ, then, were not senseless freaks of power, but acts of mercy full of symbolic meaning. Let us for a moment look at that miracle of our Lord which has been made the groundwork of a rabid attack on His character by the learned infidels of the day, the miracle of the fig-tree withered. This is the only miracle of Christ which may justly be pointed out as apparently a manifestation of mere power, not one of power and mercy combined, but if its symbolic meaning were taken into consideration, it would by no means appear destitute of all touch of that benevolence which shone brightly in all the wonders by

which our Lord signalised His extraordinary career of philanthropy

The fig-tree withered was a figure of Jerusalem as it was in the days of our Lord, delightful to look at, adorned with the beautiful foliage of external worship, but entirely destitute of the fair fruits of genuine piety, and its sudden destruction was a prophetic symbol of that which was about to overtake that devoted city. The miracle was a symbolic prophecy which might warn the chosen people living in sin of the punishment about to be inflicted on them, and thereby give them what might be called a final opportunity of escaping a calamity which was sure to exceed their powers of endurance.

Nor was its significance confined to those times, and the people dwelling amid the indolence and carelessness of false security in the ill-fated city so soon to be thoroughly destroyed, and the country of which it was the metropolis. The hypocrite in all ages and under all circumstances may look upon the fig-tree, so full of promising leaves, but so destitute of the fruit it promised, as a terrible warning, somewhat in the spirit in which all backsliders may look upon the pillar of salt, into which Lot's worldly-minded wife was converted as she looked back wistfully towards the luxuries of the plains devoted to destruction.

The miracle of the fig-tree withered, then, is full of spiritual significance, and by no means destitute of that boundless benevolence and unerring wisdom by which the infinite power of God is invariably guided. That so much has been made of this little incident by the great champions of infidelity, is a proof that they are hard up for materials fitted to feed and bring into prominence their unreasonable and unreasoning antipathy to our holy religion.

Let us conclude with the remark with which we began this discourse. The miracles of Christ are unique of their kind. The broad features of probability and genuineness

stamped upon them, the circumstances under which they were wrought, the wisdom and the mercy they displayed along with superhuman power, and the spiritual operations which they typified—all these throw over them an air of originality in keeping with what we notice in His character and teaching, and separate them by a broad line of demarcation from the lying wonders embedded in heathen mythology. Theodore Parker states in his off-hand way that, so far as miracles are concerned, Christ is rivalled by Hercules, and surpassed by Vishnu. The argument based on or involved in this statement is in simplicity, pointedness, and logical precision unsurpassed. It has only one defect—it confounds genuine coins with counterfeits, true miracles with false, the wonders which are real with the wonders which are pretended. The miracles of Hercules and Vishnu are no miracles, whereas those of Christ are genuine manifestations of power Divine.

The wildness, extravagance, and senselessness of the pretended wonders ascribed to heathen gods are fitted at first sight to display their mythical or rather grossly fabulous character, while the chastity, reasonableness, and glory of the miracles of our Lord, together with the importance of the occasions when they were wrought, of the purposes they were intended to subserve, and of the moral truths they symbolised, together also with the enlightenment of the age which witnessed them and other circumstances of the sort, point them out as historical facts, regarding which there is no room whatever for doubt.

VIII.

ORIGINAL TESTIMONY TO CHRISTIAN MIRACLES

As the miracles of Christ are unique of their kind, so is the testimony, the original testimony on which their credibility is based, unique of its kind. The miracles of Christ bear on the face, as we have seen, certain marks of genuineness, which distinguish them from the vast mass of false wonders which we see embedded in heathen mythology. In like manner, the testimony on which the credibility of these miracles hinges bears on the face certain marks of truth and reliability, which distinguish it from every species of false testimony—from testimony which is untrue and unreliable.

We have only to place the miracles of Christ in juxtaposition with the marvels with which the mythology of the world bristles, and their genuineness, their character as historical facts worthy of universal credence, becomes apparent. We have only to place the testimony on which the credibility of Christian miracles is based side by side with that which may be brought forward to establish the credibility of heathen miracles, and its truth and reliability will be apparent.

In plainer words, if we have the original testimony on which the credibility of the miracles wrought by Christ is based placed before us in all its simplicity, fulness, and

unexceptionable character, we shall be instinctively led to accept it as true and reliable

In short, we cannot examine the original witnesses to the Christian miracles, we cannot take into our serious consideration their number, their probity, and their freedom from all tendency to fanaticism, the soundness of their minds, the artless simplicity of their style, and the spotless purity of their lives, together with the highest proof of sincerity they gave in exchanging the ease and comfort which they could secure to themselves for toil and hardship, reproach and shame, for the varied trials of a long-continued career of martyrdom—we cannot take these matters into our serious consideration without being driven, as it were, to the necessity of accepting their testimony as thoroughly reliable. No court of justice can reject the testimony of men like the apostles, borne under the circumstances in which the apostles were called upon to bear their testimony, without endangering the interests of justice, or rather without scattering one and all of the universally recognised principles of justice to the winds

Let us constitute ourselves a court of justice, and examine the original witnesses of the stupendous miracles of Christ. We certainly labour under a great disadvantage, inasmuch as we cannot examine and cross-question them, as living witnesses are examined and cross-questioned. If they stood before us, living witnesses ready to give in their depositions, we might know a good deal about them by simply examining their countenances and scanning their features. We could say whether their appearance indicated honest hearts and worthy motives, or whether they betrayed their firm purpose to deceive by their anxiety, marked in their countenances, to conceal it. And when they opened their lips and gave in their depositions, we could, by narrowly watching the tone of their voices, the modes of their utterance, their gestures, and the changes noticeable in their faces, state

with tolerable certainty whether they were honest men determined at all hazards to tell the truth, or whether they were practised perjurers deliberately relating what they knew was untrue.

But this, in the case of the apostles, original witnesses of the Christian miracles, we cannot do. We cannot summon them back to the land of the living, examine their countenances, hear them talk, observe the changes wrought in their features, and then set an approximately proper value on their testimony. But though debarred from this privilege, we are in possession of what is likely to bring us to reliable, thoroughly reliable, conclusions regarding their character as witnesses. We possess their writings, in which their testimony is embodied, and by a careful and critical examination of these documents we can ascertain whether they were men of undoubted probity, honesty, and veracity, and whether their depositions are of such a nature that no earthly court can reject them without endangering the interests of justice. Their writings—the Gospels and Epistles composing the New Testament, minus the Book of Revelation—bear on the face, so to speak, indubitable marks of their honesty and veracity, of the simplicity and purity of their character, the loftiness of their aim, the soundness of their intellect, and the consequent impossibility of their being mistaken in such matters as they relate. If we carefully examine these incontestable marks of honesty and sincerity, we shall be disposed to accept their testimony as in every respect reliable.

But before we begin this important investigation, we must offer a few observations on their number, their antecedents, as disclosed in their writings, and the subject-matter of their testimony. Our discourse, therefore, naturally divides itself into four parts —1 The number of the original witnesses of the Christian miracles 2 1 antecedents, as brought to light in their writings.

subject-matter of their testimony 4 The marks of sincerity noticeable in their writings

1 The number of original witnesses of the miracles of Christ is a matter of great importance, and occupies a prominent place among the topics to be separately and seriously considered The New Testament presents the concurrent testimony of no less than eight separate and independent witnesses, all of whom were Christ's contemporaries, and the majority of whom were eye-witnesses of His great deeds and ear-witnesses of His inimitable discourses

The different books of the New Testament being bound up or presented in a single volume, we are apt to look upon the testimony embodied in them as the deposition, so to speak, of one witness, or one class of witnesses speaking in concert, or with the advantages of collusion on their side But no mistake can in reality be greater than this The different books of the New Testament were not written in concert at one and the same time, and in one and the same place They were written by different men at different times, in various places, and with divers objects, and they contain the depositions of no less than eight separate and independent witnesses, given under varieties of circumstances—under circumstances such as preclude the bare idea of anything like collusion on their part

Beginning with the Gospels and biographies of Christ, they were written by four different authors, at different times, with different objects, as the exigencies of the infant Church rendered their composition and circulation necessary Two of these precious memoirs were written by two of those favoured persons who "had companied with the Lord Jesus, beginning from the baptism of John unto that same day that He was taken up," and the other two were penned by His contemporaries, who professed to have derived their information from those who "from the beginning were eye-

witnesses and ministers of the word " We can scarcely name a great man whose life is embodied and presented in four contemporary biographies, four biographies written by men who were his companions and the companions of his companions Even two such biographies would be looked upon as a rare advantage, how much more valuable must the concurrent testimony of four contemporary biographers, four such biographers as our Gospel writers are, needs appear to sensible men !

The Epistles bound with the Gospels in the sacred volume were written at different times to different Churches and persons by apostles of Christ, and one remarkable individual who professes to have derived his information directly from Him These presuppose the truth of the history presented in the Gospels, and refer in an incidental manner, and therefore in a manner above suspicion, to its prominent features, as well as make direct allusions to them

The testimony originally presented in the Gospels is strengthened and confirmed by that directly and incidentally borne in the Epistles The Gospels may properly be said to present the original, while the Epistles may be said to present the corroborative evidence Had the Epistles not been bound in the same volume with the Gospels, the evidence they afford would generally have been regarded as valuable in the same unrestricted sense of the term in which that presented in the Epistles of Ignatius and Polycarp is regarded as valuable. But the accidental circumstance of their appearing alongside of books presenting the original biography of Christ in one and the same volume should not be allowed to diminish the value of the testimony—the corroborative testimony—they present

The witnesses whose writings form the New Testament may be divided into two classes—viz, original and subsequent witnesses, but we include them all in the

category of original witnesses Their number is a very favourable circumstance in behalf of Gospel history and the miracles embodied therein We bring to the witness-box, not one or two, but no less than eight original witnesses, most of whom profess to have seen with their own eyes the stupendous miracles which they either directly relate or incidentally notice "By the mouth of two or three witnesses" every important case, even a case involving the infliction of capital punishment, is decided in courts of justice—and here we have no less than eight separate and independent witnesses

2 Their antecedents, as brought to light in their writings, ought also to be taken into our serious consideration When some witnesses are brought before a judge to give testimony in a case of importance, he not merely examines their countenances, to see whether they have the look of honest men, but tries to catch by means of a few searching questions a glimpse of their antecedents The eight men by whom the various books of the New Testament are said to have been composed, stand as witnesses before our tribunal, and it becomes us to look into the tenor of their lives before they were articulated as disciples of Christ and the first propagators of His religion, with the exception of the greatest of them, who is to be made the subject of a separate discourse, and whose testimony may for the time being be dispensed with

These men appear from their own writings to have been thoroughly honest, though poor, attached to their nation, though belonging to its inferior ranks, trained up amid its old and venerable traditions, though strangers to scholastic education, influenced by its sympathies and antipathies, though not utterly demoralised by the tide of corruption by which it was being irresistibly driven to destruction, influenced also by its dearest hopes and aspirations, though not victimised by that dominant spirit of obduracy which

had made it entirely impervious to calm thinking and dispassionate reasoning

The varied features grouped together in this photograph may be separately and a little more graphically set forth. They belonged to the lower ranks of the Jewish people, two of them being perhaps carpenters, three fishermen, one a tax-gatherer, one a physician. This statement, dividing them into classes according to their trades and professions, may not be thoroughly accurate, but one thing is sure, that these men belonged, not to the nobility which formed the head, not to the gentry which formed the body, but to the peasantry which formed the legs and feet of the Jewish nation. They were, moreover, poor, though on the whole well-to-do, a fact scarcely overturned by the circumstance incidentally mentioned that the father of one of them had servants to help him in his work. But though poor, and belonging to the inferior orders of society, they were men of probity, distinguished in an age of vice by irreproachable lives and spotless characters.

Having been brought up amid the current traditions and associations of their beloved country, they were in their sympathies and antipathies at one with their countrymen. They idolised the Jewish nationality, despised the Gentile races, and hated the Roman yoke recently extended over them with a perfect and implacable hatred. But though victimised to some extent by prevalent feelings, they had evidently not allowed their morals to be corrupted and their characters stained by the reigning vices of their age.

They were strangers to anything like academic or scholastic education, not having been brought up at the feet of any of the great doctors of the law whose fame attracted pupils, not only from various parts of their own country, but from the Jewish colonies scattered in the most distant corners of the globe. But though innocent of what in these days would be called a liberal education, they were

not strangers to the sanguine hopes by which their countrymen were so deeply influenced. They looked upon the Roman domination as a calamity which it was wrong on their part to bear patiently, and in the depth of their impatience they eagerly looked for the immediate appearance of the promised Deliverer, who was destined in their opinion not merely to remove from their necks the yoke by which they were galled, but to exalt their nation, and place it at the head of all the other nations of the world. These darling hopes, dashed to the ground when Christ was crucified, revived when the risen Lord once more appeared amongst them, and the last question they put to their Master, "Wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" shows how firmly, how tenaciously they clung to them to the very last moment of His earthly career!

There was one peculiarity about these men which should not be passed over unnoticed. They were religiously inclined. They had a talisman in them which led them readily and cheerfully to follow Christ through all His trials, in spite of the prejudices they had imbibed and the associations by which they were surrounded. They were *true* men, in the most emphatic sense of the term, and their sincerity raised them, though slowly and gradually, above the pernicious influences of the traditions amid which they had been brought up.

They are, therefore, witnesses whose testimony in matters of fact every court would be but too happy to accept, as in every respect trustworthy and reliable. Their number is a circumstance very much in their favour as witnesses of the miracles of Christ, and when to it we add the immaculate nature of their antecedents, we are constrained to attach considerable value to their testimony, if not in matters of doctrine, at least in matters of fact.

3 Let us in the third place look to the subject-matter of

their testimony These writers do not express a number of opinions or propound a number of theories They were men of little or no education, and their opinions cannot be received with the respect with which we are prone to accept the sentiments of persons who are intelligent and well-informed They were not distinguished by profound erudition, by perspicacity of intellect, vigour of thought, or strength of reasoning, and consequently their theories cannot command that respect which we instinctively attach to speculations elaborated by men of extensive learning and calm and philosophic minds

Had the writers of the New Testament therefore only given utterance, as Mohammed and his coadjutors subsequently did, to a number of speculative and practical dogmas, a number of theological principles and moral maxims, their testimony might and would have been passed over as simply unworthy of our serious consideration But they avoid, with marvellous wisdom and modesty, the danger of losing themselves in the labyrinths of doctrinal disquisition and philosophic speculation, and content themselves with proclaiming, with the simplicity of earnest and unvarnished eloquence, a number of historical facts

The subject-matter of their testimony is a series of palpable, tangible facts, a series of *sensible* facts, or such as make a deep and lasting impression upon the senses They as a body state that they saw a number of stupendous miracles worked by Christ under their own eyes, that they saw persons afflicted with congenital blindness, deaf and dumb, or prostrated by strokes of paralysis, miraculously healed by Him with nothing more than appropriate words of command, that they saw the tempestuous sea rebuked into a calm, or the flowing waters united and hardened into a pathway underneath the fearless tread of one of their number; by His mighty power, that they saw the dead, one of whom was in an advanced stage of putrefaction, rise or

spring back into life in obedience to His omnipotent fiat ; that they saw this mighty Wonder worker, when crucified, wounded, and found dead, laid in a new sepulchre, and carefully watched, rising from the dead and appearing to them and their friends on various occasions and eating with and talking to them, and that they finally saw Him ascending up to heaven as He was in the act of blessing them, till He was separated by a bright cloud from their eager and piercing gaze

In short, they relate, seriously and circumstantially, a number of sensible facts which occurred under their own eyes, as well as under those of other reliable and trustworthy spectators In such matters, we maintain firmly, their testimony, if their sincerity is proved, is thoroughly reliable In matters of opinion, on questions of theory and speculation, they may justly be set aside as very poor authorities, to whose expressed sentiments much value cannot be attached But in matters of fact, not occult doctrine or transcendental speculation, they cannot but be regarded as witnesses of an unexceptionable character as authorities of the highest type

It is not necessary for us to prove that they were men of superior education, distinguished by the delicacy of feeling which is an outgrowth from genteel breeding and academic polish It is not necessary for us to prove that they were in possession of lofty minds, which only needed the plastic touch of scholastic culture to make them distinguished in literature and science, that they were born gentlemen, possessed of feelings which a little training under the etiquette of polite life would have brought up to a commendable degree of refinement It is not even necessary for us to prove that, simple and unsophisticated as they were, they were not entirely destitute of all education, all power of independent thought and lofty feeling—a fact which, by the way, is susceptible of an easy demonstration.

We have only to admit that they were *same* men, and we are driven to the necessity of believing that they could not, in such matters of fact as they relate, be mistaken, and that, other circumstances being favourable, their testimony, as embodied in their writings, is worthy of perfect confidence. To these other circumstances we must now direct your attention, and so we come to our last point, viz —

4 The marks of sincerity noticeable in their writings Let us look back to or reproduce a few of the remarks which we made at the outset about the course ordinarily pursued by experienced judges when they have to confront witnesses and take down their depositions When some witnesses are brought before a court of justice, the presiding officer or the judge tries to get an insight into their antecedents, to ascertain whether they are men of probity, who have always led respectable lives, and who therefore cannot be induced by a few "golden persuasions" to be guilty of deliberate perjury He then scans or analyses their countenances, to see if they have the look of honest men and trustworthy witnesses, whose words may be depended upon, whose testimony may be accepted as reliable

But when he has done this, he has not done all He has now to watch and minutely examine the manner in which their testimony is given, to weigh in his own mind their voice, their tone, their language, the changes wrought in their features as they tell their tales, the pauses by which the different parts of their stories are separated from one another, and various other minute points of manner and utterance, which enable a practised barrister or an experienced judge to see through and set a proper value on the evidence they individually or in a body adduce.

The original witnesses of the Christian miracles cannot, however, be examined in this current and approved manner The writers of the New Testament do not stand before us living witnesses with bright countenances which we may

examine, with voices, tones, gestures which we may sift and analyse, with a view to set a proper value on their depositions. They are dead and gone, and their ashes have passed through the transmutations and revolutions which, if they could be ascertained, would need volumes to set forth.

But their writings remain, having, as we have shown, come down to us unchanged through the mutations and revolutions of eighteen hundred years. We can examine, sift, and analyse these hoary and venerable documents, and ascertain whether they bear on the face indisputable marks of truth and certainty. And it cannot but be a matter of the deepest satisfaction and the most cordial gratitude to God, to every Christian heart—nay, every candid inquirer—that the New Testament bears on its face marks of honesty and veracity, such as tend to place the testimony embodied in it to the miracles wrought by Christ on a par with the most unexceptionable and the very best ever accepted in a court of justice. Let me enumerate a few of the more important of these marks in order.

a They gave their testimony in a plain, simple, matter-of-fact style. Their writings are characterised by many excellences, such as would do honour to the productions of men raised above their sphere by the advantages of broad culture and extensive and accurate scholarship, but they are all eclipsed by the charming simplicity of their diction. They embody their evidence in narratives which are neither weakened by poetical extravagance nor encumbered with metaphysical disquisitions. And therefore as witnesses they occupy a higher place than Homer and Valmiki, who not merely relate facts in the high-flavoured style of poetry and romance, but so decidedly intertwine them with the creations of the imagination and the fancy that it is impossible for us to disentangle the truth from the heaps of falsehood under

which it is buried The occurrences and facts couched in a rich vein of charming poetry in the Iliad and the Ramayana may be of an undoubted historical character, or may pass uninjured the ordeal of a rigid historical criticism ; but the style in which the great bards whose names are immortalised in these imperishable works, relate them goes far to throw an air of suspicion over them

Suppose a witness of unexceptionable character begins his story, not in a simple, sober, narrative style, but in the highly coloured diction of poetry and romance,—suppose he stands before a court of justice, and states that on a particular morning, ere the golden chariot of the god of day had rumbled out of the dark chambers of sable night, he saw streams of water issuing out of the fountains of the prisoner's eyes in dashing, foaming, eddying torrents, what value will be attached to his testimony by the presiding officer? Will he take the trouble of seriously recording such stuff as evidence worthy of an impartial hearing? Will he not rather politely ask him to leave the court with a remark somewhat like this —“ You are, my friend, a good poet, and I shall be glad to hear you when I have nothing special to do, but now I shall feel obliged by your leaving me to the important work before me”?

Had the New Testament writers resorted to the many-coloured and beautiful drapery of poetry in presenting their testimony, had they adorned their narratives with the imposing creations of the imagination and the fancy, they might have been named and praised as good epic poets, but they could not have been set up as historians worthy of our entire confidence. They have not only avoided the error of neutralising their evidence by an unreasonable recourse to the extravagance of diction pardonable in poetry and romance, but very culpable in history, but they avoid, with equal success, the opposite error of theorising on their testimony till it is literally buried under a heap of subtleties and

quibbles They are neither poets nor metaphysicians, but they are sober narrators of facts, and the artless simplicity of their style is a mark of truth indelibly impressed on their writings.

b There is a feature in their style which ought to be prominently brought forward in an age when theory after theory has been elaborated to neutralise the value of their testimony Not only is the artless simplicity of their style a mark of honesty, sincerity, and earnestness, but the absence of all mythical embellishments from their plain narratives is eminently fitted to convince us of their perfect and unimpeachable accuracy The miraculous stories contained in their writings appear destitute of those imposing accompaniments and gorgeous appendages which reveal the fabulous character of the miracles embalmed in heathen mythology Their brevity is even more wonderful than the inimitable simplicity of their language and style

The miracles they relate are of the most stupendous character indeed, but they relate them with the ease and simplicity, the conciseness and brevity, with which events of the most ordinary stamp are narrated A person would take more time to relate the case of an ordinary toothache cured suddenly under homœopathic treatment than they have taken to chronicle ten cases of long-standing and incurable diseases miraculously healed by their Great Master A historian would occupy many pages with the delineation of a somewhat strange historical occurrence more than they have occupied in describing events before the grandeur of which the rise and fall of empires, and the political convulsions by which they are at times torn and lacerated, dwindle into insignificance

Miracles of the most astounding character,—miracles fitted to set forth Christ's omnipotent control over disease in all its forms, over death itself and the principalities and powers of the lower regions, over the elements, the raging

sea, the tempestuous wind, the latent powers and forces of nature,—miracles of apparently such mighty significance that the scientists, who never look beyond the law of causality in operation in the illimitable fields of creation, are forced to look upon and represent them as improbable,—miracles of such a stamp are recorded as if they were events of the most ordinary stamp—recorded with the ease and simplicity with which we would notice the birth and baptism of a neighbour's child

Take for instance one of the most magnificent miracles wrought by Christ, the miracle of feeding five thousand men with five loaves and two fishes. The whole story is finished in a few verses. The event before us is magnificent, but the historians present a few bold outlines, leaving us to draw on our imagination, quickened by the strokes we see before us, to think of and focus the details hinted at, and thus complete the picture.

How different would the accompaniment be if the miracle recorded were a mere creation of the imagination and fancy, not a stubborn fact susceptible of the most satisfactory historical proof! Instead of simple bread and fish taken from a lad and multiplied so as to meet the requirements of the vast concourse of hungry persons assembled, we should see huge dishes groaning under costly viands springing up out of the earth in one place, a magnificent array of cushioned seats miraculously arranged in another, a splendid canopy spread over the parties seated or rather lolling over glittering plates called into existence as if by the wand of a magician, and the disciples performing their part of distributing the dainties created with a rapidity indicative of superhuman power and extraordinary wisdom.

The fact that the evangelists narrate a stupendous miracle as if it were an ordinary event, do not resort to rhetorical flourishes or mythical embellishments in recording it, is a strong mark of their veracity as witnesses. Had they been

inventors of myths, rather than narrators of well-attested and incontestable facts, they would not have fed the assembled hosts with such simple food, or recorded the miracle in so simple a style

c The absence in these simple narratives of anything like a studied panegyric on their hero is a mark of their sincerity. If you read an ordinary biography of Napoleon written by a Frenchman, or an ordinary biography of the Duke of Wellington written by an Englishman, or an ordinary biography of George Washington written by an American, you will find yourself entangled in a labyrinth of eulogies and encomiums, you will find the hero losing his individuality under the artificial paraphernalia of praise, just as Bengalee ladies lose the natural gracefulness of their persons under the endless varieties of jewellery with which they are regularly loaded. But the slightest tinge of panegyric is not to be found in the Gospels, though if there ever was a hero whose personal excellences and mighty achievements are deserving of the grandest flights of eulogy, Christ was that hero.

The evangelists faithfully and accurately report the sayings, and chronicle the deeds of their Master, and instead of philosophising over them, or making them subjects of glowing eulogy, they leave them to tell their own story. This indicates not merely that high degree of sincerity which spurns all unseemly alliance with the tricks and dodges of an artificial style of composition, but a great deal of wisdom on their part.

If their accounts had come down to us interlarded with their disquisitions and laboured encomiums, the majestic figure of Christ could not have appeared to us with its native lustre undimmed by human art. Had they not written under the guidance of the Spirit of God, they would decidedly have fallen into the error of interposing their uncalled-for praises between the stupendous character they

set forth and the eager gaze of their devout readers. But because their pen was guided by a wisdom higher than that of man, they have shrunk from the folly of spoiling their simple portraiture of Him who is emphatically an ideal of perfect piety and lofty virtue, by a recourse to the stereotyped vocabulary of human praise. From the wisdom they have thus displayed we pass to—

d Their characteristic modesty, another indubitable mark of their honesty and veracity. Never were biographers so modest as these men seem to have been. Their beloved work seems to be to place their great Master in the foreground and leave themselves in the shade. They scarcely ever express an opinion, scarcely ever make a remark, and they never have the audacity to appear with their own sentiments side by side with those of their Lord.

Their memoirs are characterized by that merit which has made Boswell the prince of biographers in the estimation of the best critics of modern times. Boswell's *Life of Johnson* gives the greatest prominence to its hero, sets before us the corpulent doctor with his conversational powers of a high order, his peculiarities and idiosyncrasies, his oddities and superstitions, his political prejudices and religious scruples, both of a ludicrous order, his intellectual greatness, partially paralysed by that moral littleness with which it was unhappily associated. Throughout the entertaining volumes we see Dr Johnson living, moving, and acting as he actually did, we see the great lexicographer and moralist pictured as we rarely see a great man pictured in the memoirs in which his career is set forth.

Now, this praise universally accorded to Boswell's *Life of Johnson* in the republic of letters is due to the Gospels. In them we see the Lord Jesus Christ living, moving, and acting as He actually did, now charming vast audiences by His rich discourses, then disclosing His Divine power by means of stupendous miracles, and anon retiring to the tops

of solitary mountains to hold sweet communion with His Father undisturbed

But the Gospels are not disfigured by the glaring faults which we cannot help noticing in Boswell. In his *Life of Johnson* we see the small figure of the biographer thrusting himself forward, with characteristic want of modesty, as often almost as we see the gigantic figure of his hero. But the evangelists never thrust themselves forward, never occupy the foreground with their opinions and sentiments. They put Christ forward, and literally sink behind His majestic figure, and their method of relating events, vocalised, runs thus—We are nothing! Christ is all in all! He must increase, we must decrease! If all the preachers of the Gospel had displayed such exuberance of genuine modesty, the cause of Christianity would have flourished a hundredfold more gloriously than it has actually done!

c The fact that they do not parade or carefully and ostentatiously assert their honesty and veracity, is another of the many marks of truth and naturalness impressed on their venerable records. A solemn, vehement, and reiterated protestation of honesty on the part of a witness is, generally speaking—nay, almost invariably—a proof of his latent determination to deceive.

You are thoroughly conversant with the manner in which judicial business is conducted in our rural courts of assessors—called *punchayats*. There you see one in full session, a number of village functionaries squatting on the carpet, spread under a shady tree, around the central *dais* occupied by the presiding judge. A witness, an old woman who has literally grown grey in the school of perjury, which she drinks like water, is brought forward and pressed, as it were, into the witness-box.

She bows to the august assembly, repeats the stereotyped oath, raises her hands upwards, and solemnly calls heaven

and earth to witness that what she affirms is the truth, and nothing but the truth. She dwells upon the impossibility of her uttering an untruth before so venerable a court of assessors. Has she forgotten that the Great God in the heavens is weighing every syllable she utters even more carefully than the presiding judge seated before her, and that a lie spoken under her present circumstances will almost indefinitely prolong her stay in purgatory, from which, as she has always been honest and faithful in her dealings with her fellow-mortals, she anticipates an easy escape? And thus she takes about a quarter of an hour to assure the assembled court that she is not going to deceive.

The preface over, she begins her story, and you may be sure that every word that escapes her lips is an impudent falsehood. Anything like that string of uncalled-for assertions, that tissue of irrelevant protestations which, in the opinion of all sensible people, completely neutralises her testimony, you will in vain look for in the New Testament. The sacred penmen are too honest to need to prove their honesty by means of solemn affirmations. They relate a number of astounding miracles, but so thoroughly conscious are they of their honesty and veracity, as well as of the well-known character of the events they chronicle, that they deem it unnecessary to encumber their narratives with protestations of their reliability as witnesses and fidelity as historians. Their manner of writing shows that they do not even dream that you will be foolish enough to question their probity. The perfect ease with which they record miracles of the most stupendous character is a proof that they are borne aloft, as it were, by a serene consciousness of their perfect integrity of purpose, and that the events they narrate had attained a celebrity which rendered all caution on their part in recording them thoroughly unnecessary.

f Their perfect candour is another of the indubitable marks of truth stamped on their writings. Everything about

these narrators or historians is of an extraordinary stamp. The artless simplicity of their style is astonishing! The spirit of conciseness and brevity which breathes through their narratives is astonishing! Their unexampled modesty is astonishing! The want of all caution on their part, even when they are relating, one after another, a series of stupendous events, is astonishing. But the most astonishing element in this atmosphere, so to speak, of marvels is their inimitable candour. They never hide their own faults, never pass over circumstances fitted to bring them into disrepute.

Their Lord rebukes them for not understanding the commonest truths stated in their hearing, and they carefully mention the rebukes aimed at them. They are told to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and they misunderstand the meaning so far as to construe it into a rebuke administered to them for their improvidence in not bringing bread with them. For such unreasonable misconstruction they receive a gentle reproof, which they frankly point out.

Their Lord often calls them "slow of heart to believe," but they do not conceal the *fact*. They are engaged in an unseemly squabble with one another for what may be called personal distinction, and the quarrel, of which, when they wrote, they could not but be thoroughly ashamed, is indicated. When their Lord was apprehended and hurried towards the High Priest's palace, they all had the baseness to forsake Him and flee. This act of culpable desertion they do not conceal, one of the greatest of their company, he who was destined to lay the foundation of the Church of God both among the Jews and among the Gentiles, denied in an evil hour their Great Master with a series of oaths. They record this fact. They disclose their own faults with inimitable candour.

Their love of truth overpowers even their love of self,

and, instead of thinking of their own honour, or being moved by a desire to send down their names to posterity untarnished, they cheerfully sink beneath the majesty of the facts they proclaim. The language of their souls evidently is, "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Thy name, O Christ, give glory!"

Put these marks of veracity, and others which may be mentioned, together, and you cannot but conclude that as witnesses the evangelists and the other sacred penmen of the New Testament, whose style, even when employed in elaborating the system of Christian doctrine, bears the very same marks of truth, are in every respect reliable and trustworthy.

Some of our educated countrymen try, in imitation of course of the style adopted by the most senseless infidels of Europe, to blunt the edge of this irresistible conclusion by asserting that these penmen were rogues, not of an inferior order, but decidedly of the first water. Practised perjurers—they have not only related a number of improbable stories, but dexterously managed to throw over them an air of truth, such as makes it impossible for ordinary readers to ascertain their real nature! There is no ordinary, commonplace fabrication, executed without a thorough knowledge of the dodges which, rightly employed, are sure to make falsehood appear in the garb of truth. There is a fabrication which bears on its face all the marks of truth and naturalness, impressed in a manner which indicates an entire absence of all design and art on their part. They have achieved a literary success which the greatest giants of the republic of letters, the greatest novelists, and the greatest dramatists, have failed to achieve.

Do not such statements attribute to a number of simple, uneducated Galilean peasants a literary skill which is positively miraculous? Do they not steer clear of the

miraculous by assuming what, if true, would itself be the greatest of miracles?

The various marks of veracity impressed on the New Testament, the simplicity of its style, the spirit of brevity which runs through it, the absence of all hyperbolical extravagance and mythical embellishments, the absence also of ostentatious eulogy and laboured disquisition, the unexampled modesty, the inimitable candour and the intense love of truth stamped on its pages—these marks of honesty cannot, in the case specially of the simple, unsophisticated writers, be naturally and reasonably accounted for except by supposing that they related in all the simplicity of truth what they had seen with their eyes and heard with their ears, except, in short, by looking upon them as witnesses of the most unexceptionable type

But it is said that they were *interested* witnesses—interested in the spread of a religion which was sure to crown their heads with the laurels of fame and honour. That the religion which they first preached amid overwhelming difficulties, or in the teeth of the united antagonism of the whole world, has raised them to the topmost pinnacle of fame and honour is an indisputable fact. Compared to the celebrity they have attained, that of the greatest warriors, the greatest statesmen, and the greatest orators the world ever saw, is as nothing. Their names are household words, held in profoundest veneration in places where the names of Newton, Pitt, and Napoleon are not known. They occupy in the great heart of Christendom a place more prominent and more sacred than has been accorded even to those whose achievements in the sphere of religion and morals have been nearly as dazzling as theirs.

While Calvin has one party in the Church of God, and Wesley another, all the innumerable denominations into which it has been divided vie with each other in venerating their memories and singing their praises. We cannot name

another set of persons who have received in this world, both in and out of Christendom, a tithe of the honour which has been most profusely, and yet with an intelligent appreciation of the services they have rendered, lavished upon them

That the religion which they preached under, humanly speaking, the most discouraging circumstances conceivable, has crowned them with the immortal amaranth of imperishable fame is undeniable. But did they foresee all the exuberance of honour which has been most copiously, though discriminately, heaped upon them during the last eighteen hundred years? If we admit that in their forlorn condition, with the world frowning upon them through its ten thousand faces—its power, wealth, learning, and influence, its most un placable antipathy and irreconcilable hate arrayed against them, and without even one cheering word from any human lips—if you admit that in their desolate condition, with the mangled corpse, so to speak, of their Master behind and the most appalling forms of violent death before them, they solaced themselves with bright anticipations of the honour which they have actually received, you admit prophetic foresight on their part, you admit a miracle of wisdom!

It is impossible to see in what sense these men can be stigmatised or set aside as interested witnesses. What did they get as a reward for the zeal and earnestness with which they proclaimed the new faith? Loss of friends, loss of relatives, loss of reputation, a life of ignominy and reproach, difficulties, dangers, persecutions, imprisonments, perils by the sea, perils by land, perils by their own countrymen, and death itself in some of its most terrific forms!

Interested indeed! You might as well call John Howard—who, for the purpose of relieving distress, led a life of martyrdom—an interested rogue! The apostles

preach a number of hard, stubborn facts, and rather than abandon their staunch, uncompromising loyalty to truth, — lead a life as well of toil and hardship as of ignominy and reproach, expose their persons to the most cruel persecutions which the ingenuity of man, backed by that of hell, can devise, and ultimately face death in some of its most violent and frightful forms, exclaiming with their last breath that the incidents they relate are all true—and you call them interested witnesses! A grosser misapplication of English words cannot be conceived!

Granting, however, that they were interested, what then? The value of their testimony depends on their character, their thorough-paced honesty and veracity, not on the nature of their connection with the events they chronicle. If the testimony of witnesses who, though truthful, are apparently interested, is to be indiscriminately rejected, the entire body of biographical and even historical literature must needs be cast overboard, and half the decisions of our courts of justice must be reversed.

Suppose a servant running away with his master's cash-box, and suppose the offender is caught, and hauled before the magistrate's court. Suppose the magistrate knows the master thoroughly, knows that he bears a high moral character, and would sooner die than speak a falsehood. With such knowledge in his possession, will the magistrate refuse to accept his evidence because he happens to be interested in the case pending? No, because the value of his testimony depends on what is essential, not on what is accidental—on his character, not on the circumstance of his connection with the box stolen. This remark is applicable to the objection against the testimony of the apostles based on the improbable character of the events they narrate. The value of their testimony depends, we repeat, with all the emphasis we can command, on their character, not on that of the events which form its subject-matter.

Add to all this the fact that the apostles were men of sound judgment, not enthusiasts and fanatics, and you have before you a class of witnesses such as are rarely seen arrayed in favour of any case, simple or complicated. The facts they relate are of such a nature that they could not possibly be mistaken about them, even if they were enthusiasts of the wildest type. But it is an additional fact in their favour that their writings bear indubitable marks, not only of their honesty, but of the admirable balance of their minds and soundness of their judgment.

And now, as I have taken more of your time than I generally do, I must conclude, and in doing so, let me bring into one focus the various facts dilated on in this lecture. Here you have some witnesses of unexceptionable moral character, sound minds, and staunch loyalty to truth, deliberately and circumstantially stating a number of sensible miracles—events regarding which no sane man can be deceived—wrought before their eyes.

The stories they relate, instead of bringing them any gain, subject them to a loss of everything that men prize most, and expose them to cruel persecution and taunts, and reproaches “far worse to bear than violence.” They are dragged before the highest tribunals of their native land, but they fearlessly proclaim that the stories they have promulgated are true. They are sent into prison, and then brought back, but their attitude continues unaltered. They are then examined one after another, but every one of the brave band continues firm, even though the alternatives before them are a life of hardship and persecution, ending in a violent death, and a life of ease and comfort, ending perhaps in opulence and honour. They are, one after another, alternately threatened and coaxed, but their heroic constancy is proof against all threatening and all coaxing.

Their steadfastness, a sublime moral spectacle, only heightens the hatred and rage of their adversaries, and

they are sentenced to public execution. They bravely face death one after another, and as each leaves the transitory scene of life behind him, he loudly proclaims with his last breath that he is dying a martyr to truth. Put these circumstances together—and these are *mutatis mutandis* the circumstances under which the apostles preached the extraordinary facts of Christianity—and you are instinctively led to accept their testimony as in every respect reliable. Your instincts tell you that men under such circumstances do not lie, and that if they did, their conduct would be a greater miracle than any recorded in the New Testament!

IX.

CORROBORATIVE TESTIMONY TO THE —CHRISTIAN MIRACLES.

To set forth the connecting link between our last lecture and this, let us begin with a little recapitulation. We have carefully examined—confronted and cross-questioned, as far as we can cross question men who live only in their writings—the original witnesses to the stupendous miracles wrought by our Lord during the short but eventful period of His public ministry. We have found their blameless antecedents, the inimitable simplicity of their style, their conciseness, brevity, and unconquerable aversion to rhetorical embellishments, their transparent honesty and wonderful candour,—we have found that these and other marks of truth-speaking, separately and jointly, each by itself and all put together, speak volumes in favour of the reliability of their testimony and the credibility of their records.

They actually gave the highest proof of sincerity which it is in the power of man to give. Their love of truth induced them to prefer a life of self-sacrifice to a life of self-indulgence, to choose hardship, danger, persecution, ignominy, reproach,—everything that is repulsive, everything that is appalling, in preference to all that men prize most,—to ease, comfort, security, respect, honour, affluence. And, almost to a man, they sealed their testimony with their blood.

Nor did they cheerfully give up their lives for a series of opinions, a bundle of theories, a system of doctrines, or a body of theology. Thousands of martyrs may be named who have perished amid unutterable tortures, but with the greatest cheerfulness and joy, for their loyalty to a series of dogmatic principles,—thousands who have been induced, by what may be called a mere whim, to mount the scaffold or commit their bodies to the flames with the greatest fortitude and the most wonderful composure.

The Jesuit regicides who assassinated unsuspecting sovereigns in the solitude of their private apartments, the fanatical Wahabee who slew Lord Mayo, gave up their lives with the greatest pleasure, believing that they had secured conspicuous places in paradise by means of the infamous deeds for which they were most justly punished.

But their deaths, though borne with heroic fortitude and wonderful patience, do not necessarily prove the soundness of the doctrines or the accuracy of the sentiments for which they cheerfully gave up their lives. Their martyrdom—if martyrdom it can justly be called—certainly proves their sincerity, their firm belief in, and warm attachment to, the dogmas or whims for which they agonised and bled. But it does not necessarily prove either the soundness of the theories they propounded, or the elevated character of the thoughts or feelings they expressed.

The case, however, was different with the apostles, they gave their lives amid indescribable tortures, and with a courage, constancy, and serene joy such as have scarcely been rivalled, never certainly surpassed, not for a number of opinions, not for the dogmas of an established or new faith, but for a series of sensible, palpable, and tangible facts.

Their martyrdom, therefore, proves not merely their sincerity, but the truth of the miraculous facts they pro-

claim This characteristic and distinguishing feature of their case is overlooked by those of our countrymen who try to neutralise the proof of Christian miracles, based on the heroic sufferings of their original witnesses, by pointing out the well-known sufferings of religious fanatics in all countries and at all times

There is in the life of self-sacrifice led by the apostles a feature to which it is time for us to call special attention They not merely abandoned the comforts and blessings of life with which they found themselves surrounded, but shook off their national predilections and aspirations, their warmest feelings, their most ardent desires, their dearest hopes and anticipations

They were Jews, born in the land of Palestine, and bred up, as we have already indicated, amid those very traditions which had led to the crucifixion of their Master. Their affections and passions, their desires and aspirations, their most sanguine hopes and anticipations clustered around their beloved country But they deliberately ran counter to these dispositions and feelings—cast aside, not merely the comforts which surrounded their bodies, but the hopes which clung around their souls And they led a new life—a life of piety and self-sacrifice—based on the truth of the facts they proclaimed

The virtues they cultivated or nourished up in the inmost recesses of their hearts were, in the first place, the antipodes of the qualities prized among their countrymen. They cultivated the spirit of sublime self-sacrifice, self-renunciation, humility, meekness, patience, forbearance, while their countrymen acted in direct contravention of the principles inculcated in their religious books, and were influenced by the spirit of self-aggrandisement, self-esteem, pride, haughtiness, impatience, and vindictiveness

Nor did they, in maturing these singular virtues in their hearts, merely run counter to the sacred traditions and

associations amid which they had been brought up, they also attested thereby the truth of the series of extraordinary facts they promulgated. The virtues they practised and inculcated harmonised with the miraculous story they proclaimed.

Admit the self sacrifice of Christ, His infinite condescension, His humiliation, passion, and death, and the life of self-abnegation, humbleness of mind, meekness, patience—the life, in short, of martyrdom for the good of others—they led, is explicable indeed. Deny the mysterious birth, wonderful career, and ignominious death of Christ, and the revolution which took place in the thoughts and sentiments, the life and conversation, of the first preachers of Christianity, becomes an inexplicable mystery, a moral miracle which cannot be accounted for.

The Christian virtues are, like the Christian doctrines, inseparably connected with the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, in which these brave preachers were determined to glory. The completeness of the life of sublime self-sacrifice they led cannot be set forth before we bring into our calculation, not merely the comforts they abandoned and the sufferings they endured, but the national predilections, the affections, passions, desires, aspirations, hopes, and anticipations which they gladly cast overboard when they gathered, a forlorn and feeble band, around the banner of the Great Master, whose crucifixion amid unutterable agonies they had witnessed.

And now we come to the broad stream of testimony by which that of the original witness is corroborated. The Churches, which the preaching of the apostles and their coadjutors reared in all the great cities and towns of the Roman Empire, come forward with the corroborative evidence which it is now our duty to sift and examine. Nor were these Churches few and far between. The testimony of Tacitus, embodied in the following passage, shows

that within only thirty years after the resurrection of Christ, the new religion made a deep impression in all the great cities and towns of the Roman Empire, its great metropolis not excepted —

“ But neither these exertions, nor his largesses to the people, nor his offerings to the gods, did away the infamous imputation under which Nero lay, of having ordered the city to be set on fire. To put an end, therefore, to this report, he laid the guilt, and inflicted the most cruel punishments, upon a sect of people who were holden in abhorrence for their crimes, and called by the vulgar *Christians*. The founder of that name was Christ, who suffered death in the reign of Tiberius, under his procurator Pontius Pilate. This pernicious superstition, thus checked for a while, broke out again, and spread not only over Judæa, where the evil originated, but through Rome also, whither everything bid upon the earth finds its way, and is practised. Some who confessed their sect were first seized, and afterwards, by their information, a vast multitude were apprehended, who were convicted, not so much of the crime of burning Rome as of hatred to mankind. Their sufferings at their execution were aggravated by insult and mockery, for some were disguised in the skins of wild beasts, and worried to death by dogs, some were crucified, and others were wrapped in pitched shirts, and set on fire when the day closed, that they might serve as lights to illuminate the night. Nero lent his own gardens for these executions, and exhibited at the same time a mock circensian entertainment, being a spectator of the whole, in the dress of a charioteer, sometimes mingling with the crowd on foot, and sometimes viewing the spectacle from his car. This conduct made the sufferers pitied, and though they were criminals, and deserving the severest punishments, yet they were considered as sacrificed, not so much out of a regard to public good, as to gratify the cruelty of one man.”

This extract shows that the religion of Christ had made considerable, nay wonderful, progress in the Roman world, before its metropolis was made a scene of unutterable horrors by the inhuman cruelty of Nero. It had spread over Judæa, the place where it originated, and reached, and influenced, and even shaken to its centre the imperial city of Rome. It is plain that multitudes of its innocent professors were victimised by the relentless persecution set on

oot by that monster of cruelty and crime, and that the large number of Christians barbarously put to death was a fair index to their numerical strength and vast influence in the metropolis of his world-wide empire

Christianity could not have attracted the notice or stimulated the rage of a Roman Emperor had its progress in the imperial city been inconsiderable, or had it been only professed by an obscure section of its vast population. The fact that a systematic persecution was set on foot by a Roman Emperor, together with the vast numbers sacrificed, is a proof that the metropolis of the then civilised world was literally shaken to its centre by the new faith within a period of thirty years after the death of its Founder.

It spread over Judæa and made a deep impression on Rome. Now it could not possibly have made progress from the metropolis of the country which witnessed its birth to that of the extensive empire of which it was a fractional part, without making a deep impression on the intermediate regions, on the fair and populous provinces lying between Palestine and Italy.

Before it could reach and seize the mistress of the ancient world with a firm grasp, it must have influenced and shaken to their centres the fertile regions of Asia Minor, the refined cities and townships of Macedonia and Greece, and the Southern Provinces of Italy Proper,—it must have influenced and permeated the whole (almost) of the mighty expanse, so to speak, of the Roman Empire from one extremity to the other. Hundreds of churches must have been reared, and thousands and myriads of Christians must have been attracted around the banner of the Cross.

Now all these churches and all these Christians are 'our witnesses, whose testimony corroborates that originally borne amid appalling difficulties by the apostles and their companions. This will be manifest if we consider or look into what their adoption of Christianity means.

Their adoption of Christianity means, in the first place, their acceptance of a number of hard, stubborn facts, of the truth of which they were in a position to judge. The apostles preached, as we have so often said, a series of facts rather than a series of doctrines—a series of miraculous facts culminating in the resurrection and ascension of Christ, and those who embraced the new faith they proclaimed evinced their faith in these. To embrace Christianity has in every age been tantamount to giving credence to and accepting a number of facts of, not only a strange and marvellous nature but a positively supernatural or miraculous character. To embrace Christianity even in these enlightened times is tantamount to accepting as incontrovertible facts the stupendous miracles which form so essential a part of the life of Christ—the stupendous miracles by which His wonderful career was inaugurated, signalised, and consummated.

But in these days there are systems of polemical theology which may draw our attention from the concrete realities to the abstract doctrines of Christianity, from historical occurrences to metaphysical disquisitions. But in the age when these infant churches were reared, and these hosts of witnesses flocked into them, the miraculous facts of Christianity were presented in all their nakedness, and there was absolutely nothing to call public attention away from them.

In these days persons embracing Christianity may in one sense be said to adopt a series of doctrines systematically arranged, as well as to accept a series of facts, but converts in those early times, when the temple of doctrine continued an unfinished structure, accepted facts rather than adopted a creed in embracing Christianity. They accepted a number of inexorable facts, a number of facts of the truth of which they were in a position to judge, a number of facts which they would on no account have believed in, had they been only fictitious, not real.

Their adoption of Christianity means, in the second place, their abandonment of all that is dear to and prized by man, and their deliberate choice of a life of ignominy and reproach, of troubles, vexations, and persecutions. Every person who embraced Christianity in those early times is a witness of the same unexceptionable type with the Apostles, who are our original witnesses. Every person, whether Jew or Gentile, gave the same high proof of sincerity, which stamps a character, not merely of reliability, but of irresistible sanctity on the declarations or depositions of the sacred penmen of the New Testament.

If he was a Jew, he had to run counter, as the Apostles had had, to his national predilections, his strongest desires, his most sanguine hopes, and his brightest anticipations, he had to cast aside his position in society and the advantages and comforts connected therewith, he had, as a rule, to abandon his relations and friends, those who were nearest to him and those who were dearest to him, he had in all cases, without exception, to betake himself to a life of extraordinary toil and extraordinary suffering, and in many cases to end that life amid the tortures of a cruel martyrdom. The comforts he abandoned, as well as the sufferings he bore, proved his sincerity, and his sincerity proved the truth of the miraculous facts he accepted. He is therefore a witness in every respect of the same high type as the original witnesses of the miracles of Christ.

If he was, on the other hand, a Gentile, his testimony is equally unexceptionable, equally valuable, equally glorious. He also had to cast aside the traditions and associations amid which he had been brought up, to accept a religion which had sprung up among a despised people, to exchange the ordinary comforts of life for the horrors of persecution, and to stand ready to choose a violent, in preference to a peaceful, natural death. His circumstances also brought

his sincerity into bold relief, and his sincerity was calculated to prove the truth of the extraordinary facts in which he publicly declared his faith, and for which he had suffered the loss of all things prized by men

So that both the Jews and the Gentiles who embraced Christianity in those days are witnesses of the same unexceptionable type with the Apostles, and their silent testimony may justly be adduced as corroborative of the original testimony, the reliability of which we have attempted to set forth. As soon as the small but heroic band of original witnesses leaves the witness-box, we find it occupied by a host of witnesses whom no man can number—a host almost as innumerable as the stars in the firmament and the sand on the seashore—a host of units, so to speak, every one of which bears on his face the unmistakable marks of the honesty and veracity we have seen indelibly stamped on the Gospel narratives

When we remember the circumstances under which they embraced Christianity, when we recall to our minds the fact that their adoption of Christianity meant the unanimous acceptance by them, under the most trying and dangerous circumstances conceivable, of a number of sensible and palpable facts, their testimony, albeit silent and inaudible, cannot but appear to us eminently fitted to strengthen and confirm the simple narratives contained in the New Testament

From the silent testimony of these flourishing Churches we now come to what, in contradistinction to it, may be called the audible testimony of the Apostolic Fathers and their immediate successors. Their testimony, we are aware, has been considered less valuable than the scanty notices found in heathen writers of their times. The fact that they were earnest Christians engaged in establishing and defending the faith originally preached by the apostles, has tended to attach a suspicious character to what we can bring

out of their writings in confirmation of the miraculous story contained in the Gospels

But the unworthy suspicions with which their corroborative depositions have been regarded proceeds from mere prejudice, as has been very ably shown by Chalmers in his *Evidences of Christianity*, and Rawlinson in his Bampton Lectures on *The Historical Evidences of the Truth of Scripture Records*. Justin Martyr, the philosopher, would certainly have been considered a witness of the most unexceptionable type, if he had continued an unbeliever, or had never cast in his lot with professing Christians. But because he embraced Christianity at the cost of everything prized by man, at the cost of his position, reputation, and every species of earthly comfort, and sealed his testimony to the truth of his adopted religion with his blood, he is to be regarded as a witness of an inferior type !

Such assertions show an entire want of appreciation, on the part of those who hazard them, of the peculiar difficulties which we have pointed out, with what you will be disposed to look upon as needless prolixity. If you only remember that those who embraced Christianity in those days accepted a number of tangible facts at the cost of everything dear to flesh and blood, you will not be disposed to regard the valuable testimony of the Apostolic Fathers and their immediate successors with suspicion. Let it be noted that, while some of them refer directly to the mighty works of Christ, all of them distinctly mention His resurrection—that miracle of miracles in which all His great achievements culminated. With this remark let me call your attention to the subjoined string of testimonies —

a Clement of Rome speaks of the resurrection of Christ in his Epistle already referred to in these words “That there should be a future resurrection, of which He (God) made our Lord Jesus Christ the first fruits, by raising Him from the dead ”

l Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, refers, in those of his Epistles which are considered genuine to several of the important facts connected with the life of Christ, and speaks of His resurrection in these words "He suffered truly, as He also truly raised Himself from the dead." Again, "We no longer keep the Sabbath, but we live a new life on the Lord's day, on which also our life rose with Him."

c Polycarp, a disciple of St John, speaks in his short Epistle, addressed to the Philippins, of the resurrection of Christ in these words "Our Lord Jesus Christ, who endured to be brought even to death for our sins, whom God raised, loosing the pains of Hades." Again, "We believe in Him who raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, and gave Him glory and a throne at His right hand."

d Barnabas, whose Epistle, even if it could be proved spurious, was written about this time, makes a distinct allusion to the resurrection and ascension of Christ in these words "Wherefore we spend the eighth day in gladness, on which also Jesus rose from the dead, and when He had shown Himself He ascended to heaven."

e Quadratus lived a quarter of a century later. He presented an apology to the Emperor Adrian. In it he thus speaks of the miracles of Christ "The works of our Saviour were always conspicuous, for they were real. Both they that were healed, and they that were raised from the dead, were seen, not only when they were healed or raised, but for a long time afterwards, not only whilst He dwelt in this earth, but also after His departure, and for a good while subsequent to it, in so much that some of them have reached to our time."

f Justin Martyr, who followed Quadratus at the distance of about thirty years, says "Christ healed those who from their birth were blind, deaf, and lame, causing by His word one to leap, another to hear, and a third to see, and having raised the dead and caused them to live, He by His works excited attention, and induced the men of that age to know Him, who, however, seeing these things, said that it was a magical appearance, and dared to call Him a magician and a deceiver of the people."

g Then, in chronological order, comes Tertullian, who says "That Person, whom the Jews had vainly imagined from the meanness of His appearance to be a mere man, they afterwards, in consequence of the power He exerted, considered as a magician, when He with one word ejected devils out of the bodies of men, gave sight to the blind, cleansed the leprous, strengthened the nerves of those that had the palsy, and lastly, with one command, when He, I say, made the very elements obey Him, assuaged the storm, and walked upon the sea, demonstrating Himself to be the Word of God."

than the absolute annihilation of the religion connected with the name of Jesus of Nazareth

He was not merely an irreconcilable enemy- of Christianity, but an acute thinker and shrewd man of the world. He knew very well that the easiest way of accomplishing his full purpose of rooting out the religion he regarded with unmitigated abhorrence, was to prove the unsubstantial or fictitious character of the facts intertwined with it. He knew very well that if he could only prove that the miracles propounded as historical facts by its first preachers were in reality fables or myths, its magnificent superstructure would at once crumble into ruins. He was shrewd enough to see that the easiest—the only feasible way indeed—of destroying Christianity was to overturn the miraculous story which constitutes its historical basis.

Why did he then admit the truth of Christian miracles, and try in a roundabout way to reach the summit of his wishes, which he might have scaled by means of a shorter and more direct route? Why did he not deny the miracles of Christ, and so try directly to effect the immediate and complete destruction of the faith he hated with a perfect hatred? Why? Because he could not do so, and at the same time pass for a sane man!

The facts were so widely known, and so generally believed in, that an attempt on his part to call their authenticity in question would have exposed him to a charge of confirmed idiocy or madness. Had there been the slightest doubt about them current, had there been the slightest possibility of disproving their historical character, the infidels of those early times would not have resorted to an indirect and roundabout way of accomplishing their antagonistic object.

But the facts being widely known and universally believed in, they could not attack their authenticity without publicly assuming the attitude of madmen. And therefore they admitted, with wonderful unanimity, the truth of the

miracles recorded in the Gospels, and racked their brains for expedients and stratagems, such as might enable them to explain them in a manner calculated to militate against the claims of the religion with which they are indissolubly connected. With their learned and ingenious explanations we have nothing whatever to do, we accept their admissions, and bring forward their testimony to convince men who are led by an unworthy prejudice to regard that of the avowed friends of our religion with suspicion.

From the concurrent testimony of the flourishing, though afflicted, Churches of these early times, of the Christian Fathers who were their ornaments, and of the avowed enemies who regarded them with implacable hatred, we now come to that furnished by those Catacombs of Rome, to which reference was made in a former lecture. These are subterranean galleries extending under upwards of nine hundred miles of streets, and containing no less than about seven millions of tombs, which were erected during the first three centuries of the Christian era, when the infant Church was called upon to pass through a series of persecutions of the most appalling character.

They hold up, as it were, a picture of the condition and belief of the early Church as graphic, as vivid, and as life-like as that of the state of ancient cities presented to us when we tread the streets of Pompeii. They not merely afford a correct index to the vast numbers of the persons who embraced Christianity in the Roman world, but clearly and unmistakably set forth the nature of the ordeals in the teeth of which the new religion had to achieve its conquests and win its laurels. But they do something more, they indicate, by a variety of symbols and inscriptions, the faith of the early Church, and the series of miraculous facts which formed its essence.

Their antiquity, though for a time regarded with suspicion by persons prone to trace their construction to

Romish fraud, has been established by accurate and reliable researches. That these underground vaults and galleries were constructed and adorned with clusters and rows of sepulchres during the first three centuries of the Christian era—when persecution compelled the professors of Christianity literally to conceal themselves in the caves and dens of the earth, and when martyrs and confessors were almost as numerous as ordinary Christians—does not now admit of a doubt.

The vast numbers of the tombs they contain show, in the first place, that Christians formed, even in times of persecution, a strong, important, and almost preponderant element in the population of the imperial city. And if they formed a strong body in Rome, their numerical strength and social influence in the different parts of the extensive empire under its sway could not but be considerable, if not of an overwhelming character.

But these millions of tombs not merely prove the miraculously rapid progress which Christianity made in her infancy, but they disclose the appalling character of the persecutions against which she had to contend. Seven millions of tombs erected in one city in the course of three or four hundred years open or unroll before our eyes a bloody page of martyrdom to which the history of the world affords no parallel. The rate of mortality must have been fearfully above the average, and nothing but the phantom of violent death can explain the destruction of life indicated.

But there is direct as well as indirect testimony to the havoc made by persecution in those early times. The phials of red fluid found in many of the tombs, the palm branches with which not a few are adorned, and the word "martyr" inscribed on a large number, are indications of the sanguinary nature of the persecutions which led to their construction.

But the inscriptions, symbols, and devices on the tombstones indicate not only the fiery ordeals through which the infant Church had to pass, but the triumphant faith which supported her under these trials. The inscriptions—he “rests,” or “sleeps,” or “is deposited,” or “at peace”—the Anchor or the Phoenix and the Peacock seen on so many tombs, as well as the resignation and hope expressed by the survivors, show that belief in a future state of glory was, in consequence of the recent resurrection of our Lord, vivid, powerful, and influential among the Christians of those days.

If, however, the inscriptions are set aside as indirect testimonies, the pictures in the Catacombs afford evidence of the most direct and satisfactory character. These pictures represent in an expressive manner several important events of the Old and New Testaments, such as the temptation of Eve, Moses striking the rock, Noah welcoming the return of the dove, Elijah ascending to heaven, Daniel among the lions, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace, Jonah under the gourd, Jonah swallowed by the whale, the adoration of the wise men, their interview with Herod, the baptism of Christ by John the Baptist, the healing of the paralytic, the turning of the water into wine, the feeding of the five thousand, the raising of Lazarus, the Last Supper, Peter walking on the sea, and Pilate washing his hands before the people.

Here you see some of the prominent miracles of Christ embalmed, as it were, side by side with the dust of those who firmly believed in and fearlessly proclaimed them in the teeth of the united opposition of the whole world. Some of the parables of Christ are also symbolised, such as the sower going forth to sow, the good shepherd leading his sheep, the wise virgins with oil in their lamps, and the foolish virgins without oil in their lamps. So complete is the panorama of what Burns calls “the Christian story” presented in

these gloomy vaults, that, if no remains of the writings of the Fathers or early infidels had come down to us, we might boldly appeal to it as evidence ample enough to confirm the testimony of the original witnesses of the miracles of Christ.

The miracles of Christ are further attested by the miraculous gifts which continued in the Church for a long time, if not for many hundreds of years, after His crucifixion, and but for which the rapid spread of Christianity in its infancy would be an inexplicable mystery, as we shall have an opportunity of proving in a future discourse. We can bring forward explicit and reliable historical testimony, not only in favour of the stupendous works of Christ, but also in behalf of the miracles wrought by His apostles and their immediate successors for at least a couple of centuries after His death.

The apostles in their Epistles—those of them, we mean, which we find in the canon—not only make frequent allusions to the miracles wrought by Christ, but refer, with a frequency and an assurance which nothing but truth can explain, to the signs and wonders which had accompanied the extraordinary message they had delivered—to the miracles, in short, which they themselves had wrought, in the name of their Great Master, in attestation of the truth they had been commissioned to proclaim.

The Apostle Paul fearlessly appeals to the miracles he had wrought in the Corinthian Church in these words: "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds" (2 Cor. xii. 12). This bold appeal, made at a time when the enemies of the great apostle were trying to weaken his authority in one of the most flourishing of the Churches he had planted, is doubly significant, inasmuch as it not only proves the fact of his having demonstrated his authority as an accredited apostle of Christ by means of signs and wonders, but discloses the way in which the first preachers

of Christianity, especially the apostles, usually attested their commission

If Paul had not worked miracles in the Corinthian Church as an apostle of Christ, and if miracles had not been generally wrought by his brother Apostles, one and all, in attestation of their commission, would this confident appeal have been made? Would Paul have given his wakeful enemies such a handle for destroying even the little authority left him by uttering what they might easily hold up as an impudent falsehood? This and many verses of the kind show that the first preachers of Christianity proved the stupendous works of Christ, not merely by the sacrifices they made, and the altered lives they led, but by miracles wrought by themselves in the presence of vigilant and keen adversaries

Nor was the power of working miracles confined to the apostolic age. The concurrent testimony of the Fathers is a guarantee of their continuance for several ages after the apostles had passed away from the transitory scene of life. Papias, whom we have represented as a connecting link between the apostolic and sub apostolic age, speaks of several miracles wrought in his lifetime, specially of one person who had been raised from the dead. Justin Martyr speaks of men and women of his times who could work miracles. Quadratus, the Apologist, himself possessed the power of working miracles, a fact referred to by a writer of the second century. Irenæus, Tertullian, and others of their age, speak of the continuance of those miraculous gifts which Paul refers to as having been bestowed in rich abundance on the Corinthian Church, and specially of the power of working miracles

It may be difficult to say when these gifts and powers disappeared, but it is certain that they continued for a long time after the death of Christ, and that the impression they made on the heathen world was one at least of the main causes

to which the rapid growth of Christianity in the first three centuries of the Christian era is to be traced

In a future discourse we shall have, as we have already intimated, to refer to this subordinate chain of signs and wonders, as events which we must postulate ere we can explain the astonishing success with which the preaching of the first Missionaries of the Cross was crowned, suffice it for the time being to say, that they cluster around and set off the glorious miracles of Christ as the stars cluster around and set off the splendour of the moon. They presuppose and prove the stupendous signs and wonders amid which the Christian dispensation was inaugurated, and the Divinity of Him in whom it centred set forth.

Here it is desirable to take notice of a subterfuge, to which people, forced to admit the unimpeachable honesty of the apostles, have recourse. They know very well that they cannot impugn the probity and veracity of these witnesses without either stultifying themselves, or involving the whole question of historical evidence in hopeless perplexity, and they are therefore willing, not merely to admit, but even to praise, their obvious sincerity.

But they take very good care to blunt the edge of this admission by drawing a picture which represents these good people as thoughtless and silly, easily led by a number of specious artifices to believe in miracles which never did, and never could, occur. They were so completely destitute of education, so simple and unsophisticated, that it was very easy to make them believe that they had seen events which they had never seen, and heard discourses which they had never heard.

It was, for instance, the easiest thing on the surface of the globe to make them believe that they had seen the lost eyesight of blind Bartimeus instantaneously restored by a command of their Master, lame men leaping with joy, and lepers cleansed in consequence of extraordinary cures similarly

effected, and Lazarus walking out of the grave in which he had lain dead and buried for no less than four days in obedience to an omnipotent call of Christ, when they had actually seen nothing of the sort !

Now, was it equally easy to make them believe that they not merely could prove their commission, but actually had proved their commission by signs, wonders, and mighty deeds? Was it the easiest thing in the world to convince them that they were conscious of supernatural powers when they could not possibly be so—that they were actually working miracles in confirmation of the truths they preached when they were doing nothing that was extraordinary?

If it was, here is a miracle more unaccountable than any contained in their plain, simple, and artless narratives—a company of sane, sensible, and sound-hearted men led, heaven only knows by what species of magical influence, to believe that they had seen the blind healed, the impotent man restored, the leper cleansed, and the dead raised when no such events had occurred, that they had received from on high gifts and powers of an extraordinary and super-human character when they had received nothing of the sort, and that they had proved their Divine commission by signs and wonders wrought through their instrumentality by their Master when they had actually done nothing beyond what it falls to the lot of ordinary men to do !

Now let us sum up the conclusions at which we have arrived. The miracles of Christ are unique, and bear on their faces incontestable marks of truth and credibility. They are embodied or chronicled in narratives of admirable simplicity, perfect naturalness, unvarnished beauty, and unimpeachable trustworthiness.

They are proclaimed, in the first place, by a set of witnesses of an unexceptionable character, men proved sensible, sincere, sound-hearted, and faithful, by the manner in which they give their testimony, by the sacrifices they

cheerfully make, by the new life they lead with alacrity, and by the violent deaths in which, almost to a man, they voluntarily terminate their earthly career

They are confirmed by the silent but eloquent testimony of the innumerable churches which were brought into existence under the mighty influence of their Spirit-inspired preaching, and which were full of men of right apostolic stamp of character, men proved sincere by the national and sectarian predilections they had cast aside, the sacrifices they had made, and the new life of austerity and holiness they were leading

They are confirmed, moreover, by the eloquent testimony of a succession of writers, who lived in times and in places when and where men were in a position to judge of their authenticity without the disadvantages associated with a distance, either of time or of place, from what may be called the scene of action, and who, had they been only untrue, would have been the first to cripple their usurped disastrous authority over the public mind

They are confirmed, in short, by that copious stream of testimony, of the most reliable character, which has come down, broadening and expanding, from the time when they are reported to have been wrought to our own age. To reject them in the teeth of such accumulated evidence is tantamount to a determination on the part of a sane man to take leave of his senses! Add to all this the fact that the eagle-eyed historical criticism of the day has not succeeded in discovering in its wide range a single flaw, such as may militate against the faith which its volume, strength, and irrefragable character are so well fitted to generate in the human mind

X

THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST

THE criteria of Divine or true miracles, enumerated in a masterly reply to Professor Powell's paper on miracles in the *Essays and Reviews*, demand in the stage of the argument we have reached a passing notice

A genuine miracle must, in the first place, be wrought in support of a truth in accord with, or not antagonistic to, "precedent revelation" or "the law of conscience" If there be a miracle wrought in support of a revelation which directly contravenes or runs counter to what we are in possession of, either in the form of a written record or in the shape of what may be called a congenital unwritten law, the miracle, though unaccountable or inexplicable on natural principles, ought not to be regarded as a manifestation of Divine power

A genuine miracle must, in the second place, be of a nature such as is calculated to render all assumption of fraud on the part of the spectators—all assumption not tentative but conclusive—ludicrously absurd The nature, in short, of the miracle, of the genuineness of which we are called upon to judge, must be particularly examined, in order that we may discriminate between a Divine intervention and what may be called a human or demoniac manipulation

The nature of the novel doctrines in support of which the miracle is wrought ought also to be made a matter of serious and profound consideration. If the doctrines be unholy in their nature and pernicious in their consequences, if they involve glaring contradictions in terms, clash with our intuitive ideas of rectitude, and threaten to usher in trains of disastrous results, the miracle wrought in their support cannot possibly be an indubitable manifestation of Divine power—nay, it is clearly an indubitable manifestation of infernal power.

The object of the miracle must also be taken into our serious consideration. If its object be beneficent and God-like, the implantation of truth, the growth of piety and godliness, the advancement of the spiritual and temporal well being of humanity, it is genuine, whereas, if its object be the propagation of a lie, the decay of holiness, the deterioration of morals, and the spread of misery and wretchedness, it may justly be represented as a clear manifestation of the malignity of hell rather than of the benignity of heaven.

And, lastly, the character of the thaumaturgist, or miracle-worker, must be taken into consideration, as throwing not merely an air of probability, but of moral certainty, over the supposition which represents his wonders as clear indications of a Divine intervention. Hence the necessity of making the character of the Lord Jesus Christ, the genuineness of whose miracles I have to show in this series of lectures, the subject of a separate discourse.

It is desirable to dwell here on the variety of reasons which lead me to call your special attention to the grand subject of this lecture, the unique character of our Lord Jesus Christ. But before I enter upon this portion of my subject, I wish to show, by a couple of appropriate examples, how the character of the person who is

reported to have worked miracles tends either to vitiate or to confirm the evidence which may be produced in their favour

Take, as our first example, the well-known miracle of the transfiguration of Krishna, or his transformation into the goddess Kali. The shepherd-god of Bindabana, the Bacchus of India, was solacing himself in the company of his *inamrata* Radha, the legitimate wife of a devout worshipper of the goddess Kali when she espied her enraged husband coming, or rather running, towards the rendezvous. Chagrined and affrighted, she informs her lover of the event and the catastrophe by which it is sure to be followed. He consoles and cheers her by saying that he is about to convert the justly excited enmity of the injured husband into a boundless confidence in her chastity, and an equally boundless admiration of her piety, by means of a stupendous miracle. He will, in the twinkling of an eye, transform himself into the goddess whose devout worshipper the exasperated husband is. He will change his flute into a sword, his garland of flowers into a garland of skulls, the piece of cloth around his waist into a cover of human fingers, and the dust underneath his feet into a recumbent image of the god who forms the pedestal of the terrible goddess. Before the conversation is over, the husband appears in the secluded place only to find his wife prostrated before his favourite goddess. He admires her piety, praises her chastity, curses himself for his unconscionable jealousy, and retires leaving the adulteress in the arms of her cunning lover.

Now, as soon as the surroundings of this miraculous transfiguration are mentioned, and the character of the thaumaturgist is seen in its true light, the glaring incredibility of the story immediately flashes upon the mind. A man of licentious character, spending his life in pleasures too gross to be even mentioned in respectable

society, cannot be an instrument of miraculous power, which he is sure to make subservient to his libidinous passions. This is an axiom, and its force ought to be recognised in our attempts to discriminate between miracles which are genuine and those which are false.

Take another instance of an opposite character, the miracle wrought by the Apostle Paul at Lystra. Here the great Apostle of the Gentiles finds an impotent man, one who has been a cripple from his mother's womb and has never walked, listening to his preaching with attention and respect, and evincing his faith in the preacher's healing power by unmistakable signs. Paul says, "Stand upright on thy feet," and he leaps and walks! The spectators, astonished at so glorious a manifestation of superhuman power, spontaneously exclaim, "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men!" They call Paul, Mercurius, and his companion Barnabas, Jupiter, and under the guidance of holy priests they proceed, with ovens and garlands, to worship them. The Christian preachers rend their clothes, and run among the people, crying out, "Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein."

Here the character of Paul throws, apart from other considerations, an air of probability over the truth of the miracle he is said to have wrought in this striking manner. Paul was pre-eminently a man of God, a champion of truth of an unimpeachable character and conspicuous piety, who had exchanged the honours and comforts of a lofty ecclesiastical status amongst his own countrymen for the reproaches, privations, and persecutions of a missionary life spent in distant lands and among strange peoples, and if it was at all necessary to invest a human being with

miraculous powers, a better man could not be selected for the purpose

Paul's fitness for the honour conferred upon him was displayed, not only by the whole tenor of a noble life consecrated to the service of God amid difficulties and hardships of the most appalling character, but by the piety and disinterestedness he displayed in declining peremptorily and indignantly the Divine worship which a superstitious people, under the leadership of a bigoted priesthood, were determined to lavish upon him and his companion. The character of the thaumaturgist, therefore, forms an important subject of consideration in all investigations having for their object the ascertainment of truth in the case of a given miraculous story

Thus you see that the character of the Lord Jesus Christ is a legitimate subject of inquiry and discourse in the line of investigation which we have been pursuing in these lectures. Christ stands before us, not so much as the propounder of a beautiful scheme of morality, not so much as the founder of a new religion, but as a thaumaturgist to whom varieties of miracles of the most stupendous character are ascribed in the only records of His life of which we are in possession. Among the many lines of investigation which the attitude in which He appears opens before us, that having for its object a minute, scrutinising, though of course reverential examination of His moral character, cannot but occupy a prominent place. It cannot but behove us to ascertain whether our Lord's character throws an air of probability, apart from other considerations, on the miraculous story intimately and inseparably associated with His short but eventful life.

Besides, the beauty of our Lord's character, and the truth of the miracles ascribed to Him in the New Testament, act and react on each other. You cannot set forth the beauty or excellence of the character without setting forth the

credibility of the miracles, nor can you call in question the credibility of the miracles without calling in question the beauty or excellence of the character. This point is not clearly seen by those who in one and the same breath coolly eliminate the miraculous element from the life of Christ, and make His character the subject of a glowing and unqualified panegyric.

It is a matter of fact that our Lord frequently referred, and that without the slightest hesitation, to His works as sensible proofs of His Divine Mission and Messiahship. Often in His replies to the artful queries of His many adversaries, as well as in His bold denunciations against the culpable absence of faith noticeable around Him, did He distinctly and unequivocally allude to His miracles as eminently fitted to substantiate His claim to be recognised and crowned as the promised Redeemer of mankind.

Now, was He the innocent victim of a delusion in all these pointed allusions to the miraculous powers already exhibited by Him? Did His disciples, by a series of flimsy tricks, make Him believe that He had worked miracles when He had in reality done no such thing? Admit this hypothesis, and you are forced to the conclusion that Christ was destitute of common sense, and that such credulity as He displayed in matters fitted to give Him an undue advantage over His fellow-men could not but be associated with some degree of moral obliquity or perverseness. Even this, the less questionable or offensive of the two alternatives before us, robs the character of Christ of its ineffable beauty, and attaches a foul blot to His spotless life.

But the other alternative, though adopted by M. Rénan, is only too horrible to think of. If Christ was not the victim of a delusion in these frequent references to His works, are we to suppose that our Lord helped His disciples to propagate a lie by a tacit acquiescence in their fraudulent schemes, if not by an actual participation in their

guilt? They who adopt this monstrous supposition strive to blunt its edge by tracing Christ's connection with the frauds, by means of which a groundless belief in His miraculous powers was generated and perpetuated by His disciples, to purely benevolent motives—to a desire to secure such general acceptance of His moral teaching as might prove a source of incalculable benefit to the world

But clear it as you will, there is the ugly fact of the Lord Jesus Christ tacitly giving His assent to, and helping forward the circulation of a number of false stories through the medium of a series of vile tricks! They who represent Christ as a model of virtue in spite of this phenomenon talk unmitigated nonsense! You cannot deny the truth of the miracles of Christ without marring the beauty of His character. The credibility of the miracles is a guarantee of the beauty of the character, and the beauty of the character is a guarantee of the credibility of the miracles

Observe, moreover, that the miracles of Christ can by no species of literary skill or speculative ingenuity be separated from His life. They are not the adventitious circumstances, the external accessories of the life of our Lord, but its very essence. They enter into the texture and form the groundwork, so to speak, of the life from which everything that is good in us emanates. That life itself is a miracle of miracles, and the stupendous works by which it was signalised are its natural environments. The supernatural character of the life being set forth, no further evidence is needed to set forth the genuineness of the miracles which are its natural acts

If it can be proved that Christ was in reality a superhuman being, all the stupendous miracles by which His career was signalised become, in connection with, or relation to it, *natural* events—events such as might in the course of nature be antecedently expected. If He was a superhuman being, He would not, for instance, come into this world

and go out of it as we, human beings, come in and go out. The laws of generation cannot but be set aside at the time of His ingress, and the laws of dissolution cannot but be set aside at the time of His egress, while every step of His life cannot but be signalled by a palpable departure from the laws of human development. So that if the extraordinary character of Christ's life be clearly and indisputably set forth, no further evidence will be needed to prove the genuineness of the miracles, which, though calculated to astound us, are but its natural developments. This, then, is an additional reason for the alacrity and pleasure with which I now call your attention to the life in which we see reflected the glorious character of our blessed Redeemer.

Again, I beg to call your attention to the character of Christ, not simply because it gives an air of probability to the stupendous miracles by which His career is said to have been signalled, but because it is itself a standing miracle of a glorious and striking stamp.

The character of Christ—with its light and shade, its tenderness and severity, its sublimity and loveliness, its superhuman glory and human attractiveness, its sterner elements in beautiful combination with its softer features, its equipoise of virtue, symmetrical development, serene grandeur, and ineffable excellency—the character of Christ is indeed the wonder of wonders, the miracle of miracles! It is not tarnished by a single blot,—it is not disfigured by a single defect. Its symmetry is not marred by a single element misapplied, a single feature misdirected, a single quality disproportionately developed, a single virtue so placed as to interfere either with the beauty of each of the several parts or with the unutterable glory of the whole. It is, in a word, the very picture or type of perfection, and as such separated from every known development of human character by a gulf that is impassable.

Man is in this world, even under the most favourable

circumstances, a heap of weakness, inconsistency, and imperfection, and human character is, in its highest phases of development, a union of defects, a combination of virtues which do not consist with one another, of features which trench upon one another, and of elements which literally clash with one another. In man magnanimity is tinged with pride, humility is associated with abjectness, courage is accompanied by rashness, prudence is neutralised by timidity, benevolence is not guided by wisdom, justice is not softened by mercy, pious fervour is marred by carelessness, and unrelaxing vigilance breeds the spirit of legalism. Every virtue in man is combined with a cognate vice, every excellency is counteracted by a corresponding defect, every trace of beauty is seen amid environments fitted to mar its appearance.

Nothing, alas! in man is perfect. His dispositions and feelings are at all times misdirected and misapplied, they are improperly developed, and often encroach upon one another, and hence his character, even when matured by the loftiest principles and sanctified by the Spirit of God, is a mass of discordant elements, rather than a spectacle of harmony and beauty.

But Christ's character is a spectacle of harmony and beauty. Its excellences are properly developed, its virtues are balanced, and its ineffable glory is not marred by a single imperfection or defect. It is therefore *superhuman*, and cannot possibly be explained by the law of natural development. It is itself a moral miracle of the highest order, and its manifestation in conjunction with physical miracles, such as those which our Lord is reported to have wrought in the presence of crowds of wondering spectators, was natural—an event which might have been antecedently expected.

But the beauty of Christ's character is not merely inseparably associated with the truth of the miracles. He is reported

to have wrought, but it is indissolubly allied to His Divinity. Admit that Christ worked miracles, and the unspeakable beauty of His character remains intact—above suspicion, above the slightest possibility of a reasonable doubt being entertained by reasonable men. Deny the truth of the miracles ascribed to Christ, and His character becomes, not a fabric of spotless beauty, but a tissue of pride, self-assertion, and arrogancy, combined with unscrupulousness of the most horrible stamp !

In the same manner, admit that Christ was God, and the beauty of His character remains intact, but deny that Christ was God, and His character becomes a heap of the most daring impiety, the grossest egotism, and the most execrable imposture ! The beauty of Christ's character is associated with His Divinity, even more decidedly than with the genuineness and credibility of the miracles ascribed to Him in the Gospels.

It is simply a matter of fact that Christ claimed Divinity oftener, in more emphatic terms, and in a greater variety of ways, than He referred to the stupendous miracles on which He rested His Messianic claim. And therefore the beauty of His character displays the Divine Nature, which lay concealed within the sphere of His human surroundings, even more thoroughly than it does the superhuman power He manifested when He healed the sick and raised the dead.

But the question may be and is in this country often asked, Did Christ ever claim absolute equality with God, equality in essence and in character ? Did He appropriate to Himself the incommunicable titles and attributes of God, and claim a parity of working power with Him ? Did He ever expressly, or even tacitly, claim the adoration and the homage, the prayers and the praises, to which, according to the spirit and letter of Scripture teaching, the Creator alone is entitled ?

Yes, most assuredly He did, and that not by means of hints and innuendoes, not by means of vague assertions and ambiguous and evasive statements, but by means of express declarations, positive announcements, and solemn asseverations. To prove this, I have only to call your attention to the extraordinary nature of the claims He advanced with dignity, persistency, unfaltering faith in their propriety, and a serene anticipation of their ultimate recognition by mankind in general.

1 Observe, in the first place, that our Lord separates Himself by a sharp line of demarcation from all other human beings. He appears indeed on the transitory scene of human life, but He appears, not as one of those ordinary actors who pass through it without leaving a noticeable mark of their existence behind them, not even as one of those extraordinary actors who rise up at stated times to effect great and striking changes in its general appearance, but as a superhuman Actor destined to alter its course completely, and direct it into a new channel. He treads this nether world indeed, but He treads it, not as a creature on a par with even the noblest and the best of those beings who fight their petty battles and gain their little victories without materially improving it as a whole, but as a Heavenly Visitor, whose every word is to send a thrill of elevating influence into the inmost depths of its spirit, and whose career is to result in its glorious transition from death into life. He appears as Man, indeed, with human weaknesses and human surroundings, but He points, with a steady finger and miraculous dignity, to the wide chasm that separates Him from the species which He stoops to crown.

Are you inclined to regard this as so much naked and meaningless metaphor? Hear what He says, with unfaltering self-confidence—"Ye are from beneath, I am from above; ye are of this world, I am not of this world." But does He not unite Himself with mankind when He calls God His

Father, and exhorts them to look up to Him as their Father? No, the very terms He employs draw a sharp line of demarcation between Him and His hearers. Jesus meets Mary standing near the sepulchre and weeping, manifests Himself to her, and says, "Touch Me not, for I am not yet ascended to My Father but go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father, and to My God, and your God." He in this verse honours His disciples with an endearing epithet, calls them His brethren, identifies Himself with them by placing Himself in a familiar, brotherly relationship to them, but still He shows His essential distinction from them by declaring the impossibility of their looking up to God as their Father in the sense in which He Himself is privileged to do so.

But does He not unite Himself with humanity by calling Himself the Son of Man? Yes, by means of this very expression, He indicates His unity with, as well as divergence or separation from, man. Observe, He does not call Himself a Son of Man, but the Son of Man. Man indeed, but not as men born as we are—Man *par excellence*, the Model Man, the Perfect Man, the Crown of humanity, the Culminating point of human greatness and human glory!

He is one with us in His possession of a nature similar to ours, but He is separated from us by an immeasurable distance, in consequence partly of His entire freedom from that which vitiates, corrupts, and degrades our humanity. He came into the world and went out of it, not as we fallen men come and go, but as a Higher Being who voluntarily limited Himself to all the conditions of humanity, excepting those by which humanity is degraded and brutalised. And He was conscious of His superhuman origin, and in His intercourse with fallen men, though full of benignity and tenderness, He never lost sight of, or scrupled to point in the most emphatic manner to, His essential

difference from them—to the impassable gulf by which He was separated from them

But our Lord draws a sharp line of demarcation between Himself and other human beings, not only by setting forth His superhuman origin, but by publicly declaring His complete freedom from the taint of sin. Christ is human in every respect but those which are calculated to exhibit human depravity and human frailty. His piety is of a peculiar type, and is separated by an impassable chasm from the varied types of piety of which fallen man is capable. Christ's piety has, of course, some features in common with human piety, resembles human piety—in kind, but not, of course, in degree—in its guiding principle of love to God and love to man, in the faith, the trust, the self-surrender, the love, the benevolence, and the joy with which it was accompanied. But in one respect our Lord's piety is most obviously separated from the brightest forms of human piety

Christ's piety does not begin with repentance, and is not accompanied by a single confession of depravity or weakness. Repentance, penitence, sorrow for sin, desire to mend, strenuous efforts to do what man cannot, unaided, effect, self-confidence producing self-diffidence, fears and doubts of legalism followed by a glorious deliverance, joys moderated by failure, hopes damped by defeat—such are the common experiences and early manifestations of human piety. But our Lord's life is entirely free from these essential elements of that piety of which man in his fallen condition is capable. Repentance is not the foundation of Christ's piety, nor is the spirit of penitential confession its invariable accompaniment.

A holy childhood developing naturally into a sanctified youth and consecrated manhood—such is the unique spectacle the biography of Christ presents. No confession of sin or guilt, no acknowledgment of weakness, defeat, or

failure, ever escapes His lips Is it because His ideas of perfection are defective, His moral perceptions are blunt? No, the standard of perfection He holds up is infinitely higher than any ever indicated in human philosophy

"Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect"—such is the lofty ideal of perfection developed in the beautiful system of morality He propounds and illustrates! But though He looks up to the highest standard of perfection which has ever been held up before men, He never utters a word or gives a sign fitted to show that in any respect He falls short of its requirements Nay, He points with one finger to the lofty ideal of life before Him, and with another to Himself, and in unfaltering accents utters the challenge, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" He claims perfect sinlessness, and in so doing separates Himself by a sharp line of demarcation from all other human beings

2 But Christ advances a step further He not merely separates Himself by a sharp line of distinction from all other human beings, not merely represents Himself as a Being of a superhuman origin with unfaltering confidence, but He actually claims Divinity, and that in the most unequivocal and emphatic manner conceivable He appears on the scene of life in a human form, indeed, but He claims to be the Creator, Preserver, Redeemer, and Judge of the world—its Master, its Lord, its God He claims unrestricted, unlimited, perfect equality with God when He solemnly affirms, "I and My Father are one"

Modern commentators of the Rationalistic School may literally torture this saying into a meaning in harmony with their humanistic theories, but the Jews who were His hearers knew what He meant, and expressed their abhorrence of what they viewed as His blasphemous pretensions by taking up stones to inflict upon Him

the capital punishment to which such a declaration, in their opinion, rendered Him liable according to their law

Observe, also, that in this verse, as well as when He says, "I and the Father which sent Me," He places Himself on a par with the Father in the close, friendly association implied in those words, "*We* will come unto him and make *our* abode with him" He claims Divinity not only by placing Himself on a par with the Father by means of direct announcements of the most positive character, not only by claiming equality with the Father in unmistakable terms, but by allowing persons to call Him Lord and Master—by allowing unbelieving Thomas, for instance, to address Him, "My Lord, my God"

He appropriates to Himself the incommunicable attributes of God He claims eternal, underived, absolute being when He says, "Before Abraham was I AM" This assertion may appear a light thing to us, but the Jews who took up stones to stone Him knew that any mere man who thus appropriated to himself the incommunicable name of God, Jehovah, was guilty of gross blasphemy, and they regarded Jesus as only a man

Christ claims omnipresence in space when He says, "Where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I in the midst of them," and in time when He says, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world"

He claims omnipotence when He affirms that *all power* is given unto Him in heaven and in earth, and when He represents Himself in various places as the owner and possessor of *all things* And He shows that He is omniscient, the Great Searcher of the hearts and the reins, both by reading and bringing to light the inmost thoughts of His hearers, and by the significant words addressed to

Nathanael, "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee"

Christ claims omniscience, the infinite, unbounded knowledge possessed by God, when He affirms, "*As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father*" Christ represents Himself as God when He claims the homage due to God in these words, "That all men should honour the Son, *even as they honour the Father*"

It is not my intention now to present a long array of passages, culled from the different books of the Bible, in favour of its central doctrine of the Divinity of Christ, nor is it my intention to prove, that if what may be called the vein of testimony and evidence in favour of this all-important truth of Christian theology running through the Scriptures were abstracted from them, the sacred writings would literally be shorn of their bulk, their unity, their literary charm, their religious interest, their life, and their soul

We repeat, with all the emphasis we are capable of, that if the Scripture declarations and proofs in favour of the Divinity of Christ were extracted from the pages of the Holy Writ, that sacred volume would be much mutilated in its letter and violated in its spirit My object being to place before you a few of the express declarations in which our Lord claims Divinity without the slightest equivocation and subterfuge, I need not multiply quotations, the few I have selected and put together being enough to serve my purpose. You cannot candidly read these extracts from the sayings of our Lord without concluding that Christ claims Divinity in the most unequivocal, unmistakable, and emphatic terms

But Christ claimed Divinity, not only by positively asserting His equality with the Father, not only by appropriating to Himself the names and titles, the incommunicable attributes, and the worship of God, but by representing Himself as a joint-agent or fellow-worker with

God, in the preservation of the world and as the Judge of mankind

When the Jews, in obedience to the spirit of a false tradition, accused Him of desecrating the Sabbath day, He answered them in these significant words, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" If these words, in the connection in which they were uttered, mean anything, they mean that our Lord, in conjunction with His Father, has to work uninterruptedly, unceasingly, constantly—on Sabbath days as well as on week days—to keep the complex machinery of the world agoing As the Preserver of the world created by and for Him, His work is not, cannot be interrupted by the returning Sabbath, by religious festivals or solemn fasts

But can He be Jehovah's fellow in the great work of the preservation of the world, without being omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient? Is it possible for Him to be the Preserver of the universe, without being God? In order to do His work as Preserver of the universe, He must govern the moral and material forces at work within the compass of this illimitable creation, must guide all moral revolutions, social developments, and political convulsions, must regulate the rise and fall of empires, and the movements of nations, corporations, associations, guilds, and professions, must control clashing wills and discordant feelings, must dispose events and reconcile jarring interests, must be present everywhere, must have a thorough knowledge of everything, and must be able to counteract and overrule all opposing influences—must, in one word, be God

The Lord Jesus Christ claims Divinity in the most unmistakable and emphatic manner when He, in the words already quoted, discloses His share in the great work which has for its object the preservation of the universe Nor does He claim Divinity less emphatically when He repre-

sents Himself as our Supreme Judge, as He who is to bring the mundane system to a close by finally rewarding the righteous and punishing the wicked. He represents Himself as Judge both of the quick and the dead, not only by means of definite and unmistakable allegations, but by means of a vivid picture of the proceedings of the day of judgment. He occupies the august throne of Judge, sees the righteous gathered on one side and the wicked on the other, pronounces solemn irreversible decrees, rewarding the one class and punishing the other, and winds up with a statement showing where the reward is to be enjoyed and the punishment experienced.

Now, is it possible for Him to do His work as Judge of the quick and the dead without being God? Take only one individual case, the case of a single man. The Judge must know the disadvantages, the moral and physical taints with which he was born, the circumstances under which he has been brought up, the measure of light which has been vouchsafed to him, the influences which have been brought to bear upon him, the examples and precepts by which his character has been moulded, the extent to which he has allowed his passions to cloud his judgment, the amount of evidence resisted by him, the motives which have influenced him in his actions, the dispositions by which these motives have been coloured—oh, who can enumerate the endless details the Judge must be in possession of before he can come to a correct decision in one individual case!

And when the entire range of duty before the Judge is taken into consideration, when it is remembered that a thorough, unexceptionable knowledge of all hearts, all motives, all thoughts, and all feelings forming the groundwork of human history is needed to enable Him to discharge His judicial duties, we cannot but look up to His assumption of these functions as a plain declaration of His God-

head That our Lord claims Divinity is thus placed beyond the possibility of doubt

3 But Christ proceeds a step further still He, as it were, throws God into the background, and occupies the foreground His self-assertion is supreme—His egoism is astounding He does not preach a religion, a morality, a creed, or a dogma—He preaches Himself! He does not deliver a message, and allow Himself to sink behind its greatness and importance He is Himself the Author and the Subject of the message He delivers Instead of interposing the ineffable glory of God between Himself and His audience, He interposes Himself between God and His audience, He preaches Himself—draws all hearts to Himself, and makes Himself the cynosure of all eyes, the object of all thought, the centre of all feeling, the resting-place of all devotion, and the goal of progress

Hear what He says—"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to *Me* Come unto *Me*, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and *I* will give you rest. I am the Light of the world I am the way, the truth, and the life I am the Resurrection and the Life, He that believeth in *Me*, though he were dead, yet shall he live Whosoever liveth and believeth in *Me* shall never die" Passages may be multiplied almost *ad infinitum* to show that Jesus draws towards Himself the upward gaze, the penitential confessions, the earnest prayers, the pious dispositions, the heavenward aspirations, the fervid adoration, and the implicit confidence of humanity

Admit that Christ was God—admit the essential unity presupposed in our doctrine of the Holy Trinity between the Father and the Son, and all is natural, reasonable, and proper But deny this essential unity, and you cannot but conclude that Christ passes through what may be called an ascending climax of impiety and blasphemy He begins by declaring His superhuman origin, advances to the blas-

phemy which leads Him to represent Himself as equal in every respect to God, and finally rises to the height of egoism in thrusting the Creator into the background, and directing and appropriating to Himself all the good desires, pious affections, and devout feelings of human beings

Now you have the stupendous claims of our Lord before you—claims infinitely higher than any ever advanced by man in this world! Do you stand awestruck, astonished, and speechless before them? Here is another fact even more wonderful, more astounding than this! The world, ever quick to laugh at and ridicule pretensions of an apparently absurd character, allows the prodigious claims preferred by Christ! Nor is it in any conceivable way predisposed to do so. Its spirit, its science, its philosophy, its traditions, principles, associations, and recollections are all marshalled against these extraordinary claims. The world allows the propriety of our Lord's prodigious assumptions, not because they are in harmony with its spirit and policy, but in spite of the fact that they clash most violently with its preconceived notions and principles. The world bows to the stupendous claims of our Lord because it cannot possibly explain them except by allowing their propriety and justice

It cannot form a rational theory regarding the Person of Christ without being logically compelled to admit the strictest propriety of the marvellous assumptions clustering around Him. For these stupendous claims being set aside as obviously absurd, the alternatives before us are only two—either Christ was one of the vilest of wretches that ever lived, or He was one of the wildest of fanatics that ever disgraced the cause of religion and morality. But neither of these alternatives is tenable, and consequently we are driven by every principle of sound argumentation to the necessity of admitting the justice of Christ's claims, in spite of their extraordinary and astounding character

Let us examine for a moment the first of these alternatives. That our Lord advanced, deliberately and with the greatest confidence, these stupendous claims does not admit of even a shadow of a doubt. They are not excrescences which may be separated from the tenor of His life—they enter, on the contrary, into the texture and form the groundwork of His earthly career. They are presupposed in the peculiar style of teaching He adopted, in the tenor of the extraordinary life He led, in the nature of the glorious plan He worked out, and in the strength of the astonishing confidence with which He looked forward to its ultimate triumph. They are intertwined with the tenor of His life, and can no more be separated from it without destroying its consistency and coherence, than the woof can be separated from the warp without destroying the fabric before you.

These prodigious assumptions, therefore, were not subsequently hatched and fictitiously ascribed to Him—they were deliberately advanced by Him both in the early stages of His career as well as in that closing period of His life when His Messianic consciousness is said to have been fully developed. They stand out in bold relief from His works as well as from His words, from His plans as well as from His discourses, from His sufferings as well as from His short moments of victory and triumph—from, in short, the manner in which He thought and spake and acted. They are therefore most emphatically *His* assumptions.

Now what do they prove regarding His moral character? Does not the fact that He being a creature not only placed Himself on a par with, but even went so far as to thrust the Creator into the background, both by representing Himself as the all-in-all and by appropriating to Himself the love, gratitude, and veneration due to God alone—does not this fact tend to brand Him as the most impudent of impostors that ever lived?

A man of like passions with ourselves representing Himself as having come "from above," as "one" with the Father, as "the way, the truth, and the life," as the "True Vine" in which all persons anxious to serve their Creator must be grafted, as the Lord who must be loved infinitely more than father, mother, wife and children, as the Good Shepherd who leads God's people like a flock through the trials and vexations of life, and as the Judge who on the awful day of judgment is to pronounce in the case of every individual the doom irrevocable which is to fix his condition for ever—a man of woman born, induced, by pride or self-interest, to arrogate to Himself such stupendous titles and powers, is a knave of the first water, the worst of pretenders, the vilest of wretches!

But might we not assume an apologetic tone, and affirm that our Lord was led by the purest motives of benevolence, not by pride or selfishness, to assume these extraordinary titles, and to appear under this extraordinary character? No, such a supposition is utterly inadmissible. No man of sound mind can ever persuade himself to believe that he can possibly anchorate the condition of the world by transferring its loyalty and devotion from God to himself. If our Lord arrogantly assumed titles and prerogatives which He as a creature could not appropriate to Himself without the grossest impiety and the most astounding blasphemy, His motives could not but be of the most infernal order. Christ was on this hypothesis a vile impostor, an arrant knave!

But who will, who can, who dare adopt this conclusion? Our instincts revolt against it! The world can never be persuaded to believe that the Man of Nazareth who went about doing good, who spake as never man spake, who acted as never man acted, who suffered as never man suffered, who lived and died as never man lived and died, and whom we instinctively hold up as a perfect model of virtue—the world

can never be persuaded to believe that He was an arrant knave, the vilest of pretenders, and the worst of men Our first alternative, therefore, is utterly untenable.

The time has happily gone by when a man could have represented Christ as a pretender, or reflected on His moral character, without being stigmatised and despised as a fool The life of Christ is so universally recognised as unique in its loftiness and grandeur, the virtues of Christ are everywhere believed to be of so pre eminent an order, the glory of Christ's character shines with such undiminished lustre, the aureole around Christ's head is so demonstrably Divine, the unction of Christ's name is so full of heavenly fragrance, that the man who, amid the acclamations raised in every nook and corner of the civilised world in honour of our Lord, not to speak of the adoration poured upon Him in hundreds of thousands of churches and millions of homes, stands up and represents Him as even the best of all the religious impostors that ever lived, is sure to be looked upon, if not pilloried, either as an ignoramus or as a mad-man !

The thing which brands M Rénan's *Life of Christ* as a book beneath contempt, in the opinion even of sensible rationalists, which has led to its being represented as issuing out of the corrupt moral atmosphere of Paris, with its frivolity and profligacy stamped on its pages, is the insinuation that our Lord, being a little puffed up by the flatteries lavished on Him, as well as finding it impossible to do good without resorting to questionable means, allowed Himself to be a willing tool in the hands of unscrupulous men, who made His name the war-cry of a new dogmatic movement

Rénan makes Christ appear as almost Divine, but because he throws out an unjust insinuation to the prejudice of our Lord's character, His frivolity has been made the subject of most vehement attacks even by his brother infidels This

fact is scarcely known to our educated countrymen, who are ever ready to idolise him and his little book, and who are not aware that, in cherishing books and pamphlets in which the character of our Lord is directly or indirectly attacked, they show themselves emphatically behind the age, as well as by themselves open to the charge of gross ignorance, which, whenever brought against them, they are so decidedly prone to retaliate

Now let us take into consideration the second of the two alternatives indicated—let us admit that Christ was, not indeed a pretender, but one of the wildest of the religious fanatics that ever lived. Christ was the prince of religious enthusiasts! But Christ showed on all occasions traits of character, dispositions and feelings, which are never seen associated with religious enthusiasm. Christ showed, under varieties of circumstances, the greatest wisdom, the soundest judgment, the most perfect self-possession, the most complete self-control, the most admirable evenness of temper, and the most commendable calmness of mind, serenity of spirit, and dignity of manner—dispositions and qualities which are, not only never seen in conjunction, but at war with the wild spirit of fanaticism.

Nor was our Lord a recluse who spent His life amid the retirement of a secluded library, and who therefore never came in contact with the trials and vexations of a life of perpetual and intense activity. No human being has passed through a series of trials so poignant, amid sorrows so agonising, as those which our Lord was obliged, by virtue of the unique position He held in human society and the mighty work He came to accomplish, to face and encounter. His life was one long tissue of trials, vexations, persecutions, sorrows, distresses, agonies, all of an extraordinary character, and all fitted to tell most unfavourably on His sensitive spirit. But He passed through them all unmoved, without betraying a single error of judgment, a

single freak of temper, the slightest want of self command, the least fault of disposition or manner

On all occasions of His life, both great and small—in His moments of sweet retirement and meditation, as well as in the busiest hours of His eventful career, in the quiet seclusion of His beloved circle of friends, as well as in places of public resort, in the lull of such relaxation as He could snatch from a life of intense activity, as well as amid the storms of fiendish persecution, when tempted in the wilderness, as well as when strengthened by holy communion with His Father in sequestered mountain retreats, when discoursing sweetly in the retired family circle of Lazarus, as well as when surrounded by a mob determined to make Him their king against His will, when moving unmolested from place to place on His errand of mercy, as well as when literally dragged to the highest ecclesiastical tribunal of His nation, when progressing to the Royal City amid the hosannas of a magnificent procession, as well as when nailed to the cross amid the sarcasms and reproaches of an infuriated populace—under all these varieties of circumstances, and amid all these varieties of trials, the Lord Jesus Christ was a sublime example of the loftiest virtue, the most wonderful composure and self-possession, the serenest temper and the soundest judgment

Surely to stigmatise such a man as the wildest of fanatics is downright madness! Our instincts shrink as well from the responsibility of representing Him as an enthusiast of the first water, as from that of holding Him up as the worst of impostors that ever lived. Both these alternatives are therefore inadmissible!

There is no sense in representing Christ as an enthusiast of the wildest stamp, and at the same time holding Him up as an unexceptionable, perfect model of virtue. Some writers maintain that, though Christ was victimised by delusions and hallucinations of the most extravagant kind, His right to be

regarded as a paragon of moral beauty cannot be called in question. These writers, however, forget that mistakes so gross as those in which our Lord is said to have fallen—that hallucinations so grotesque as those by which His mind is said to have been victimised—could not but have sprung from some moral obliquity, some fault of temper or disposition.

Just think of the nature of the errors of judgment ascribed to Christ by this incoherent, self-contradictory hypothesis. Though a human being of like nature with ourselves, He fell into the mistake of supposing that He had come down from above, and possessed a soul of a thoroughly ethereal mould. Though a creature of a subordinate order, He considered Himself by an unaccountable mistake authorised to annihilate the infinite distance between Him and the Creator, and to assert with the most astounding confidence His equality with the Father! Though bound by the very law of His being to contribute His quota to the incense of prayer that rises up to the Throne above, He was led by an inconceivable error to forget Himself so far as to appropriate to Himself the honour, the reverence, the homage, and the adoration which the world has reserved for God only!

How could our Lord have fallen into these inconceivable mistakes without being, to some extent, nay, to a great extent, morally depraved—without being inflated with pride, demoralised by flattery, maddened by success? Conceits such as these, errors of judgment so ludicrously absurd, hallucinations so ridiculously extravagant, would reveal a frightful amount of moral depravity, not merely a slight touch of delinquency.

The mistakes connected with religious enthusiasm—those, we mean, which have led people to assume prophetic functions and become founders of religions—invariably indicate moral obliquity in proportion to the degree of extravagance by which they are marked. The more extravagant these mistakes are, the greater is the amount of moral depravity

they display And when they, as in the case of our Lord, on the supposition in question, transgress all limits of propriety and assume forms of the wildest and most fantastic character, when they are of a nature never seen in conjunction with even the most grotesque types of insanity known amongst men, they manifest an amount of moral corruption which it is fearful to think of If Christ was an enthusiast of the wildest character, His enthusiasm was associated with depravity of the worst type, and He could not possibly be held up as a sublime example of moral perfection!

Now we conclude that Christ was neither an impostor of the worst stamp nor an enthusiast of the wildest order Our moral instincts rebel against either of the two alternatives before us, and we are therefore driven by every principle of correct reasoning to the conclusion, that Christ was what He most emphatically claimed to be, God Incarnate, Emmanuel, God with us! And so the world has been compelled, against its will and the spirit of the traditions by which it is governed, to allow the extravagant pretensions, the prodigious claims advanced by our Lord

And if you stand awestruck and confounded when Christ claims Divinity with immutable dignity and calm, unfaltering confidence, you have reason to make yourself the very type of "confusion worse confounded" when you find that the Church, consisting of the most civilised portions of the great human family, has during the last eighteen hundred years prostrated herself and worshipped Him as God!

The Divinity of Christ must be recognised and postulated ere a consistent, rational theory regarding the Person of Christ can be formed The Divinity of Christ is a corollary to the Life of Christ And if Christ was God-incarnate, His career could not but be a series of stupendous miracles—a lofty platform, so to speak, as well of Divine excellence as of Divine power

That such a Being would come into this world in an extraordinary manner, that He would put forth His unlimited power just as a rich man of a benevolent disposition would employ his riches in mitigating human distress, that He would teach with authority and denounce crime in the garb of piety with terrible earnestness, that He would gain the confidence of His followers by occasionally manifesting His control over nature, that He would show His ability to annihilate the moral consequences of sin by demonstrably annihilating its physical consequences, that He would suffer with unparalleled dignity and give up His life of His own accord amid the agonies of shuddering nature, that He would burst the bonds of death and ascend up triumphantly into the skies, leading captivity captive,—all these incidents of His short but eventful life might have been antecedently expected. And so miracles become in His case *natural* events, the ordinary developments or actions of an extraordinary life!

The life of Christ proves His Divinity to demonstration. You cannot think of His well-balanced character, His perfect freedom not only from the pollution of sin, but even from the slightest touch of moral frailty, His lamb-like innocence dissociated from every vestige of weakness, His fervent piety free from all tincture of superstition or asceticism, His boundless benevolence untainted by vanity or ostentation, His superhuman power exhibited in acts of beneficence, but never employed in His own service or for His own advantage, His unerring wisdom evinced in the complete success with which He escaped the snares and gins laid for Him by His subtle adversaries, His strength of will, earnestness of purpose, sublime courage and astonishing patience—you cannot think of these without being instinctively led to exclaim—*Ecce Deus*—Behold God!

You cannot think of the vastness and grandeur of His plan—His desire to restore a perishing world to the lost

favour of God by pouring out His life as a libation for sin, and to establish a kingdom which is not merely to unite all nations, languages, and tongues in the bonds of a common brotherhood and last as long as the world, but which is to include all things in Christ Jesus, whether they be things in heaven or things in earth, and to go on flourishing throughout the endless ages of eternity—you cannot think of the originality, the comprehensiveness, and the ineffable magnificence of His plan without being led instinctively to exclaim—*Ecce Deus*—Behold God !

You cannot think of Christ as a Teacher, free from the prejudices of His own or any other age or nation, without education, and consequently the slightest assistance received from the accumulated stores of human learning, holding up an even balance between all extreme views, siding neither with Conservatism nor with Liberalism, teaching with authority without resorting to rhetorical embellishments, hair-splitting distinctions, metaphysical quibbles, or subtle explanations, expressing the sublimest truths of religious philosophy in the simplest words, never apparently anxious about the success of the truths inculcated, but looking forward with calm confidence and unfaltering faith to their ultimate triumph—you cannot think of Christ as a Teacher without being instinctively led to exclaim—*Ecce Deus*—Behold God !

You cannot think of Christ as a sufferer prostrated by anguish of spirit when there is apparently no reason for such excess of sorrow, evincing a cheerful spirit and a light heart when called upon to endure pain and face real danger, appearing with a mild remonstrance before the mob sent to arrest Him, but not deigning to reply to the false accusations preferred against Him, maintaining a dignified silence even where an attempt at self-vindication may lead to His release, thinking of the sorrows of others when hurried to the place of execution, and praying for His cruel

persecutors when nailed to the cross—you cannot think of Christ as a sufferer without being led instinctively to exclaim—*Ecc Deus*—Behold God !

Study the Gospel portraiture of Christ, and you will spontaneously exclaim, in the words of the centurion of old Truly this was the Son of God , while His prodigious claims and stupendous miracles will appear the natural and reasonable appendages of a life which is the greatest of all wonders, and which the greatest men of genius—not to speak of His poor ignorant biographers—could not have depicted without having the original before them !

XI.

THE EARLY PROPAGATION OF CHRISTIANITY.

THE plan with which our Lord commenced His labour of love is, in originality, vastness, comprehensiveness, and grandeur, one to which the history of human schemes and projects does not afford a parallel. He intended and publicly expressed His determination to organise and establish a kingdom co extensive with the world, as enduring as the eternity before us. His kingdom is to overleap all geographical and ethnological bounds, to spread over all lands and all countries, to include all races and all nationalities, and to unite all the jarring elements of humanity into a compact brotherhood. Nor is this kingdom to be circumscribed by limitations of time.

It is emphatically a universal kingdom, including all nations, languages, and tongues, comprehending all empires, realms, and countries, embracing all the divisions of time, eras, epochs, years, and days, and rolling on through the endless ages of eternity. Nay, it is universal even in a wider and loftier sense—universal in the sense of going beyond the narrow horizon of this world, and including all things in Christ, not only those which are to be found in it, but the thrones and dominions, principalities and powers beyond its precincts.

Again, its comprehensiveness is commensurate with its

vastness or universality It is an empire which controls, shapes, and fashions, not only our actions and words, or the tangible and visible things to which the jurisdiction of earthly government is confined, but our thoughts and feelings, or the unseen things with which earthly governments have nothing whatever to do It is an empire over the faculties and susceptibilities of our souls as well as over the varied members of our bodies, over the sanctuary of our thought and feeling as well as over the sphere of our life and conversation, over things unseen and eternal as well as over things seen and temporal Its business is not merely to keep the peace of the world, but to secure its regeneration, not merely to push forward the cause of civilisation, but to promote piety and godliness It is emphatically a kingdom of God—a kingdom, not merely of peace and plenty, but of righteousness, holiness, piety, and godliness—a kingdom flowing, not merely with milk and honey, but with joy and gladness

And who is to be the monarch of this mighty empire, the supreme object of its loyalty and devotion? Christ Himself, the Sovereign of the kingdom of God, the centre of its allegiance, the one object of its undivided homage, as well as the one source of its perennial life and light! Did ever a human being conceive so lofty an idea, and advance so extraordinary a claim?

The marked originality of the plan our Lord expressed His determination to carry out is of itself, or apart from the considerations pointed out in a former lecture, an indubitable proof of His Divinity Eye had not seen, ear had not heard—nay, dreams had not pictured a kingdom so universal in its extent, so permanent in its duration, so comprehensive in its reach, so magnificent in its object, so unique in its origin, so mighty in its progress, and so glorious in its consummation The most glorious ideas of the profoundest philosophers of the world are but trash

compared with a scheme of such magnificent proportions. The most romantic projects of the wildest visionaries the world ever saw are mere trifles compared with the plan our Lord developed in His discourses and parables, and the triumph of which He looked upon and represented as certain in the darkest hours of His life, as well as in seasons of momentary prosperity.

Who was the author of this majestic, this glorious, this superhuman, this Divine plan? The reputed son of a poor carpenter, a man without liberal education or scholastic training, brought up in an obscure corner of a despised town, amid associations fitted to make Him a champion of local traditions and sectarian interests. Without learning, without wealth, and without influence, He issued out of the shop of a poor carpenter, determined to regenerate mankind in general, and bringt hem into subjection to His beneficent sway, determined to sit enthroned in the great heart of humanity, determined to be the object of universal homage, not only in this world, but throughout the length and breadth of the universe ¹. And so confident was He of success, that He looked upon the accomplishment of His plan as certain when others saw it crushed in His premature and ignominious death! You cannot think of Christ's plan, of the sobriety and confidence with which it was developed, and of the feelings of exultation with which its gradual realisation and ultimate triumph were anticipated and set forth, without being compelled to exclaim with the centurion of old—Truly this was the Son of God!

The marked originality of Christ's plan tends also to prove that He was neither an impostor nor an enthusiast. Observe, Christ's plan was not only not in accordance with the traditions and associations current among His countrymen and contemporaries, but in antagonism to them. He did not, either in the conception of His scheme of operations or in the way in which that scheme was carried out, pay

homage to current ideas and current aspirations—on the contrary, He unequivocally and emphatically opposed them

Now an impostor invariably adopts the favourite notions and gives expression to the ardent desires of the people whom he is determined to mislead. He knows very well that his success depends upon the skill and dexterity with which he humours popular prejudices, flatters popular traditions, encourages popular hopes, and enlists on his side popular sympathy and co-operation. He knows very well that if he fails to win popularity, or if he stimulates popular hate by placing himself in antagonism to current ideas and wishes, his schemes are sure to be frustrated. He therefore falls in with current aspirations, and he never dreams of ostentatiously and suicidally setting his face against prejudices and passions, which it behoves him to conciliate and employ to his own advantage.

Christ, however, did not pursue the line of policy which is invariably adopted by impostors. He not merely abstained with scrupulous care from the slightest alliance with the current traditions of His age and country—He did not even leave them unchallenged and unrebuked. He positively declaimed against them with holy indignation, censured their grossness, denounced their secularity, pointed out the wrong spirit from which they flowed, and discouraged the fallacious hopes which they fed. He would not certainly have pursued a course so decidedly suicidal if He had been an impostor. Besides He could not have, as Channing says, sustained Himself under His stupendous and majestic plan with the admirably serene dignity which marked His career from the beginning to the end.

Had He been an impostor, He would have at times betrayed a littleness incompatible with the grandeur of the work He purposed to accomplish, an inconsistency or a grotesque failure such as would have imparted a wild, visionary character to His career. The matchless dignity

with which He comported Himself under the varied exigencies of so original and so stupendous a plan, and under the peculiar trials to which His work exposed Him, is a proof that, whatever else He might be, an impostor He was not

The marked originality of His plan also proves that He was not an enthusiast. An enthusiast is the product of current notions and prevalent ideas—is, in short, one in whom such notions and such ideas are personified in an exaggerated form. Joan of Arc was an enthusiast, and she was a legitimate offshoot and an exaggerated impersonation of the current ideas and hopes and aspirations of her country. But Christ had nothing in Him in common with the current traditions, hopes, and anticipations of His countrymen. He displayed a type of character and a plan of work in antagonism to current ideas and current aspirations, and He was therefore neither an enthusiast nor a pretender.

The plan of our Lord was superhuman, and the brilliant success with which it was early crowned, in spite of the concurrent opposition of the whole world, was a miracle, and may be brought forward in support of the miracles wrought during His life. Belief in the miracles of our Lord was spread by superhuman means—by God Himself in a manner which is positively miraculous. Hence the miracles of Christ are genuine. You see the connection which the early propagation of Christianity has with our subject—our attempt to prove the genuineness of the miracles of Christ. You see how the early triumphs of Christianity tend to prove that the miraculous stories embodied in the Gospels are authentic and perfectly reliable narratives of facts, not fables or fictions to be rejected as unworthy of credence.

The origin of Christianity was miraculous, and its early propagation was a miracle. We see the seal of the Almighty both in its origin and in its promulgation and preservation in the world, the hand of God in its birth, and in the succes-

sive stages of its progress to the universal dominion predicted by its Founder and first preachers. And as Christianity is a series of miraculous facts rather than a bundle of doctrines, that which proves its Divine origin, and the special protection it enjoys, proves the genuineness of its miracles.

This will be evident if we take into consideration—

- 1 The rapid success of Christianity during the first three centuries of the Christian era
- 2 The full significance of that success
- 3 The time and age when it was achieved
- 4 The agents employed.
- 5 The means used, and
- 6 The difficulties and obstacles encountered and overcome

A proper consideration of these points will force on our minds the conclusion that the propagation of Christianity is unique of its kind, and displays the arm of the Almighty in all its stages, and consequently the Divine origin of Christianity.

1 The success of Christianity during the first three centuries of the present era—that is, from its origin to the time when the gigantic empire of Rome, not to speak of outlying regions, lay a conquered territory underneath its all-subduing sword—is, to say the least, astounding. The different stages of its propagation during this eventful period may be shown in the following order—an order indicated by Paley, whose dissertation on the subject is rather poor, and followed by Wilson and other well-known writers.

(a) The death of the Founder, who was publicly and ignominiously executed as a malefactor and a blasphemer, is the starting-point of ecclesiastical history. The hundred and twenty followers, who met in an upper chamber, a forlorn and desolate band, showed the little progress His cause had made during the period of His public ministrations,

and the utter impossibility of its being revived and rendered triumphant by any human means But, contrary to all expectation, the number swelled in a very short time to five thousand, and the cause prospered so much that the hostility of the nation was roused against the preachers, and a general persecution was raised to check its further spread

The result, however, only baffled the calculations of its enemies, as their persecutions led to a dispersion of its professors, and its rapid spread in consequence throughout Palestine and the neighbouring countries The conversion of Saul of Tarsus in the vicinity of Damascus shows that its promulgation even in these early days was not confined to Jerusalem and its neighbourhood, but had extended beyond the limits of the Holy Land

(b) About thirty years after these incipient operations occurred the great persecution of Nero Tacitus, in a passage quoted by a host of Christian apologists, distinctly states that this monster of vice, after having set fire to a portion of Rome to enjoy the sight of a widespread conflagration escaped the just fury of the populace by fastening the blame on the poor Christians of the imperial city, and by getting up a terrible persecution against them and their brethren elsewhere

They were so numerous in that city, that the butcheries lasted for some time, and the cruel emperor had the satisfaction of gloating over sufferings a hundred times more dreadful than those occasioned by the conflagration Their numerical strength and general prosperity in Rome proves that Christian colonies had been planted in all the great cities, towns, and villages lying in the extensive tract of country between Judæa and Italy, and that even before the reign of Nero Christianity had risen to an importance such as an emperor of the Roman world could not but behold with uneasiness

(c) About fifty years after this cruel persecution the im-

portant correspondence passed between the Emperor Trajan and his viceroy in Bithynia, the Younger Pliny, from which so many interesting points regarding the Christians of those times may be gathered. Those particularly related to the present argument may be briefly mentioned.

Pliny officially reported to the emperor that the professors of the despised religion were so numerous in Pontus and Bithynia that they could be found in large numbers not only in cities, but in villages and the open country, that they represented people of all ranks of society, and of both sexes and all ages, that in consequence of their vast influence the temples were deserted and the solemn feasts neglected, and that beasts brought to the markets for victims had no purchasers.

The evil was of such portentous magnitude that he could not deal with it without special instructions from his imperial master. Its ascendancy in these provinces betokened its ascendancy in all Asia Minor, then one of the most populous and civilised countries in the world, if not in the neighbouring islands of the Ægean Sea and the neighbouring countries of Macedonia, Thrace, and Greece Proper.

(d) Then followed the era of the first Christian apologists, who wrote in glowing terms of the status of their religion, of the special Divine intervention manifested in its unparalleled progress, of the unreasonableness of the persecutions raised against it, and of the utter impossibility of its being extinguished by the rage of its adversaries.

Justin Martyr, in writing of the propagation of Christianity about thirty years after Pliny, said that there was not a nation "either of Greek or Barbarian, or of any other name, even of those who wandered in tribes and lived in tents, amongst whom prayers and thanksgivings were not offered to the Father and Creator of the Universe by the name of the crucified Jesus."

Tertullian, coming fifty years after Justin, said that "though but of yesterday, Christians had filled cities, islands, towns, and boroughs, the camp, the senate, and the forum," that they belonged to all ranks of society and represented all ages, that they were numerous not only in every part of the then civilised world, but among the Moors and Gætulians of Africa, the inhabitants of the border provinces of Spain, the Sarmatians, Daci, Germans and Scythians, and the remote portions of Britain and France unknown to, or known to the Romans by name only

About the same time Clemens Alexandrinus contrasted the prevalence of Christianity with that of philosophy, and triumphantly affirmed that while the latter, being confined to small societies in prominent cities in Greece, could be easily extinguished, the former, having leavened the masses both in and out of that cradle of science, might laugh at the attempts made to effect its extermination

And lastly, Origen made, about thirty years after the rapid progress of Christianity in spite of opposition throughout Greece and all other countries, the groundwork of a strong argument in favour of its Divine origin. While making every allowance for what may be called rhetorical exaggeration, no candid man can read the writings of these times, the apologies of Christian orators, the censures of heathen philosophers and poets, and the proclamations and edicts of emperors, without being convinced that the religion of Christ was fast advancing to universal dominion in the Roman Empire and wonderful preponderance in all the outlying countries

(c) Within less than three centuries after the ascension of Christ, His religion had mounted the throne of the Cæsars, swept away all the relics of the old superstitions from the Roman world, converted temples into churches, idolatrous festivals into Christian solemnities, and a gaudy,

sensuous ritual into the severity of a rational creed and spiritual worship. Constantine's proclamation, making Christianity the established religion of the Roman Empire, resulted from political more than religious considerations. He found Christianity the predominant faith of the civilised world, professed by a majority in every city, town, or village, defended by the learning and wit of the age, and rendered fashionable as well by the wealth and dignity brought over to its side as by the prominence it had attained in every rank of society.

Arnobius, writing a short time before this revolution, maintained that Christianity had risen from the ranks to the higher orders of society, insomuch that grammarians, rhetoricians, logicians, and philosophers vied with each other in proving its truth, extolling its spirit, and celebrating its praises. Indeed, the ease with which this mighty revolution was accomplished in the most civilised part of the world, and among its most enlightened races, is itself a proof of the predominance it had attained and the public recognition it peremptorily demanded.

The authorities then advanced Christianity somewhat in the way in which the Directory advanced Napoleon, under the belief that if they did not advance him he would advance himself in spite of them. And now the language of Christian apologists was enlivened and exalted by triumph such as would have made even the fervid eloquence of a Tertullian doubly glowing and effective.

Eusebius sees in the rapid spread of Christianity, in spite of overwhelming difficulties, an irrefragable proof of its Divine origin, and Jerome, some time after, presents, with honest pride, a long catalogue of the nations brought to the light, including such distant peoples as Indians, and of the authors by whom the doctrines universally venerated in his day had been advocated and eulogised.

2. Let us now take into consideration the full significance

of the triumphant progress thus indicated. The propagation of Christianity implies, not merely the propagation of certain dogmas, but the promulgation of certain facts of a miraculous character. Belief in Christianity implies, as has been so often said, belief in a series of stupendous miracles—the miraculous birth of Christ, with its attendant wonders—His extraordinary growth in knowledge, manifested in occasional but overpowering flashes of omniscience—His teachings, of Divine authority and wisdom, and the many and glorious miracles wrought in attestation of the matchless power inherent in His twofold nature—His transfiguration, and the blaze of ethereal glory by which His humanity was completely concealed from the eager gaze of the favoured witnesses—His excruciating sufferings in the garden, alleviated by angelic ministrations—His dying agonies, such as the world had never witnessed since the beginning of days—His burial with the rich, resurrection, and ascension—such are the astounding and apparently improbable facts which the early missionaries of the cross preached, and which the Roman world accepted as indisputably true.

Nor were the doctrines intertwined with these miraculous facts less astounding and less apparently improbable. The Trinity, original sin, redemption through the blood of the crucified God-Man, justification by faith, illumination and regeneration by the Holy Spirit, man's reunion with God effected solely by means of passive receptivity, not active service—these doctrines, which have caused multitudes to stumble at all times and in all countries, were unhesitatingly proclaimed and cordially accepted. The sacrifices, moreover, demanded by the missionaries were of the most astounding character.

Perfect, though not ascetic, isolation from the world, dissolution, when necessary, of the dearest ties of blood, separation from wealth, luxury, and ease, a thorough abnegation of self, implicit obedience to the will of God mani-

fested in His Word and in the events of Providence, mortification of the corrupt impulses of human nature, such as concupiscence, revenge, malice, and uncharitableness, patience under distresses, meekness under sufferings, quiet submission to oppression, and sincere and fervent prayer for the oppressor—such were the stern and amiable virtues which the preachers represented as absolutely and indispensably necessary to a fair and consistent profession of the religion they promulgated

These sacrifices, so trying to flesh and blood, were peremptorily demanded by them, and multitudes whom no man could number rushed forward, impelled by some power which they perhaps could not at first understand, to comply with their extraordinary demands. They called upon men to forsake the world, and at their bidding men in crowds innumerable forsook the world. What more proof of the extraordinary influence by which their work was helped forward is needed?

It should be borne in mind that no one can properly study the history of these times without being convinced of the purity of doctrine, simplicity of faith, and holiness of life, by which the first professors of Christianity, both great and small, were, as a body, distinguished. Their peculiar circumstances rendered a half-hearted profession, or laxity of belief and principle, an impossibility. The wondrous facts inseparably linked to Christian doctrine were all too fresh to be indifferently contemplated or imperfectly believed, while an attempt to represent them as myths and legends, made in subsequent times with marked success, would but stimulate universal ridicule and call forth convulsions of laughter.

The doctrines were too intimately associated with these to be trifled or played with by men who could not deny the facts without exposing themselves to the charge of insanity, and the principles, stern and inflexible though they were,

were bound up with both fact and dogma by ties strong enough to discourage evasion and subterfuge.

The furnace of trial in which Christians found themselves preserved their doctrinal belief from heterogeneous admixture, and their lives from the moral contamination of an age of universal frivolity and licentiousness. Their hatred of heresy in all its forms, their unwavering adherence to the fundamentals of Christianity, their rigour in the maintenance of ecclesiastical discipline, their unquestioned purity of life and character, their meekness, patience, fortitude, and heroism under tortures the very mention of which causes us to shudder, the sacrifices they cheerfully made, the injuries they meekly bore and gladly forgave, the deeds of benevolence by which they adorned their profession, the terrible forms of death which they preferred even to the deviations from principle such as would have been considered perfectly allowable and venial in this refined age, pointed out by their persecutors to save their lives—these excellences have rarely been rivalled, never certainly surpassed, in the history of the Church down to our own times

They, as a body, were no indifferent professors, no time-serving trimmers. Christianity was a reality to them, not merely a fashionable creed to be openly professed, but secretly trifled with, and their close adherence to its principles—those which are now out of fashion among worldly people—amid scenes of cruelty and bloodshed, such as the imagination refuses to dwell upon, has secured to them an imperishable renown among thoughtful men, and unfading crowns of glory among the angelic intelligences of heaven. And we repeat, that the progress of the religion of Christ in that era of universal persecution was genuine, was *real*

But the first professors of Christianity were ignorant and foolish persons, easily carried away by every wind of doctrine, and their conversion could not be a crown of

glory to the religion they professed. This charge has been brought against earnest Christians at all times and in all ages, and the arch-calumniator of those early days, Celsus, tried to fasten it upon the people he hated with all the vehemence of an antagonism which every sensible man would have either entirely concealed or considerably moderated.

But the accusation is as foolish as it is old and threadbare. For, only admit the charge, and the conclusion that Christianity is a heaven-bestowed religion becomes irresistible. If Christianity can make ignorant and foolish men paragons of virtue, models of character, sublime examples of self control and self-abnegation, philanthropists in times of peace, and heroes in times of persecution, its Divine origin ceases to be a problem. It is impossible to conceive a victory so glorious, a triumph so dazzling, as that implied in its causing the weak things of the world to confound the mighty, nay, the things that are not, to bring to naught the things that are.

But it is not true that the first triumphs of Christianity, though extensively and abundantly displayed among the commonalty, were confined to the commonalty. The testimonies we have referred to speak of widespread progress, progress embracing all countries, all ages, both sexes, and all ranks of society. The wealth of the rich, the titles of the great, and the erudition of the current schools of philosophy, were all ultimately, if not in the very beginning, won and brought over to the side of a cause which had been originally upheld with trembling hands by a number of fishermen and peasants.

The preachers of primitive Christian times, indeed, gloried in their freedom from the trammels of a learning which was demoralising the world by bringing in the blight of universal scepticism, but by-and-by the eloquence of the forum and the subtleties of the schools were em-

ployed in defending the faith against which they had exhausted their rage in vain

If Ignatius and Polycarp could exhibit the superiority of their religion only by means of a holy life, an exemplary piety, and sublime fortitude and heroic endurance amid the agonies of martyrdom, a Justin Martyr and Origen arose subsequently to bring philosophic thought and logical acumen as tributes to the sacred cause Jerome presents, as we have already said, a catalogue of the authors who had wielded the pen, with more or less marked ability, in behalf of Christianity, and enumerates no less than *a hundred and twenty writers* who had flourished down to his own age

3 Let us now take into consideration the time and age when this mighty revolution was effected Many Christian writers of unimpeachable orthodoxy have tried to show that the world had been quietly and slowly prepared for its reception of Christianity, and that the time when it was first promulgated was of all times the most favourable for its rapid growth and development Much of what these writers insist upon may be admitted, and yet the fact remains indisputable that an era of luxury and indifference in religious matters could not materially help forward the cause of an earnest faith, a pure worship, and austere morality

The Roman world, within a small and obscure corner of which the religion was founded and first promulgated, was sunk in luxury and vice, and one has only to glance over the annals of Suetonius and Tacitus, to look into the unfathomable depths of the corruption which prevailed within its vast boundaries Voluptuousness of the most disgusting type prevailed among the great, rank scepticism flourished in the schools of philosophy, poets and satirists laughed at the very idea of religion, vices and crimes which are unmentionable were openly perpetrated, and society in general

seemed plunged into the lowest depths of degradation. A corruption so widespread and so conspicuous could not but affect the common people, and an unreserved abandonment to vice and contempt of religion might be represented as the most noticeable features of the age.

Men, women, and children manifested a savage delight in witnessing the scenes of cruelty and blood connected with the gladiatorial shows of the age. High-born dames and modest damsels showed with their fingers the human victims to be butchered. Wives poisoned their husbands for the impure embraces of their paramours. Husbands poisoned their wives to get possession of their dowries, and innocent children were mercilessly exposed to death by their cruel parents. And the crimes which Nero and other monsters like him committed in broad daylight, and under the eyes of innumerable spectators, cannot even be mentioned.

It was an age which loudly cried for reform, but reform at such a time could not but be beset with difficulties commensurate to the urgency and imperiousness with which it was demanded. An earnest faith could not easily prosper in an era of scepticism, a pure and spiritual worship could not prevail with ease in an age of sumptuous festivities and gaudy shows, and an austere morality could not but encounter difficulties of overwhelming magnitude in times of gross, unrestrained, and unblushing sensuality.

There was a paramount need for a religion like that of Christ, but there was a recoil from it, a dread and hatred of it, proportioned to the magnitude of the evils to be removed, and the malignity of the vices to be swept away. And the opposition which Christianity had to encounter, the ingenuity employed, the subtleties employed and the persecutions raised, all show that an era of licentiousness and scepticism, though manifesting an unmistakable necessity for reform, was by no means favourable to its growth and development.

4 Let us in the fourth place consider the qualifications of the agents by whom this mighty revolution was accomplished. There was something ineffably sublime in the buoyancy of trust showed by the Founder, in the hour of momentary triumph as well as in the darkest hour of apparent defeat and discomfiture. His equanimity never forsook Him, His foresight was never clouded, His hopes never languished, His spirits never drooped. A tranquil and sublime confidence in the rectitude of His cause, and the glorious vision of its ultimate triumph, sustained Him in the midst of His unparalleled trials, and He looked forward to the termination of His sorrows amid the agonies of a painful and ignominious death with assurances of victory, such as were the more wonderful, the more incompatible they were with His peculiar circumstances.

Obscurity, poverty, the reproaches of His own brethren, the inconstancy of the mob, now ready to make Him their king by force, and then taking up stones to pelt at Him, the uniform contempt of the proud and the self-righteous, the scoffs and taunts of the impious, the treachery of His false friends, and the desertion even of those on whose fidelity He might be supposed ready to rely with the fondest hopes, the malignity of an inimical council and misguided crowds, the farce of a judicial trial, the mocking of the soldiery, the gashes of the scourge, the tortures of the cross, were His lot. He passed through them all, and passed unchanged in spirit, His confidence never shaken, His hopes ever buoyant !

Need we wonder that even Rousseau could not contemplate this spectacle of sublimity and glory without coming to the conclusion that "the life and death of Christ were those of a God"? Need we wonder that even Theodore Parker scouted the idea of fabrication by affirming that only a Jesus could have fabricated a Jesus? This sublime confidence, this unclouded foresight, these resplendent hopes, animated the first missionaries of the cross, if not to the extent which

had revealed the Divinity of the Founder, at least to an extent which is marvellous

No condition can be conceived more depressing, more forlorn, and more desolate than that in which they found themselves, when the malignity of persecution removed from their sight Him who had been their Master and Guardian, their Friend in distress, their Comforter in sorrow. They were poor, friendless, and helpless, and they found the whole world before them armed to the teeth to dispute their pretensions, to maltreat their persons, and to put an end to their lives.

Without wealth, learning, or fame, without the glamour thrown around persons by nobility of birth and precedence in rank, without even patrons to furnish them with what may be called the sinews of war—with friends prone to stigmatise them as fanatics and fools, and act the part of spies—with enemies not merely heaping on them ignominy and reproach, but willing to subject them to tortures of the most excruciating stamp—with the power, wealth, learning, ingenuity, malevolence, and malignity of the world ready to exhaust their venom upon their devoted heads—apparently cut off under such overwhelming trials from the blessed Presence which alone could revive their drooping spirits, which alone could cause the rays of a bright hope to glimmer through their dark souls—surely the history of the world does not present another set of men whose circumstances were so gloomy, and whose difficulties were so appalling.

And yet these ignorant men thus situated, so forlorn, so completely hemmed in by difficulties of the most formidable character, spoke of their hazardous and apparently Quixotic enterprise with an assurance of hope such as has never been displayed by the most successful general on the eve of a victory all but certain. To them the ultimate triumph of their religion was only a question of time, and they calmly

and confidently looked upon the whole world as conquered territory And, wonder of wonders ! they lived to see their day-dreams realised to an extent such as was enough to foreshadow the complete fulfilment of the glowing prophecies they uttered ! They scattered themselves throughout the greater part of the then known world, and everywhere, as they marched forward, mighty superstitions receded, time-hallowed institutions and customs fell down flat upon the ground, and the wilderness bloomed as the rose And to-day, when Socrates and Plato have perished, or live only to tickle our fancy at times when we have nothing important to do, their word is law in millions of homes scattered over the fairest as well the darkest regions of the world Why resist any longer the conclusion that the word they preached was the word of God, the power they were endued with was the power of God ?

5 But we now come to the means employed by the first missionaries of the cross They were unique, and have, so far as we are aware, never been employed, alone and unsupported by other expedients, in the propagation of any faith, creed, or dogma.

One cannot look at the extensive sway and gigantic proportions of some of the most prominent though effete religions of the world, such as Hinduism, Confucianism, Zoroastrianism, and some others which may be named, without being curious to ascertain when and how they were founded and spread But all speculations on this head are useless, inasmuch as their origin and early development are enshrouded in impenetrable darkness We have certain and reliable knowledge regarding the progress of Moham-medanism, and but a few glimpses of the methods used by the early propagators of Buddhism

The means resorted to by the apostles and first preachers of Christianity are different from those to which the ascendancy of these two creeds is to be attributed They did

not have recourse to the sword employed by the one, or the law, accommodating, tortuous, Machiavellian policy marvellously developed by the other. Their resources were preaching and persuasion. They preached the word of life in season and out of season, and wrote gospels and epistles, which were copied, translated, and scattered broadcast over the whole world. Power they had none, wealth they had none, learning they had none, and the ignoble tricks of an underhand policy they were too high-minded and too earnest to have recourse to. Their greatness of soul, their true magnanimity, their indomitable spirit, their constant, uncompromising, and unbending principle, were not the least remarkable among the many wonders connected with their miraculous career.

As men they were meek and lowly, and in matters indifferent they were all things to all men. But combined with the amiable and conciliatory features of their public and private character there was an adamant firmness which nothing could shake, which the terrors of imprisonment, torture, and death only rendered even more unyielding, and therefore more heroic. Concessions and compromises could not even be dreamed of by men of such heroic mettle, and they discouraged, condemned, and stigmatised everything that could in the slightest degree be construed into an attempt to overreach and deceive. During the latter portion of the first century some pious frauds were practised by a few misguided fanatics, but their artifices were mercilessly exposed by the Church before they were detected by the outer world.

The early preachers of Christianity, those who were regarded as the champions of the faith and the pillars of the Church, were men of strict principle, and they never stooped to anything unworthy of their profession. Truth in all its nakedness—truth abstracted from the embellishments of rhetoric and the subtleties of philosophy—truth, uncom-

promising and invincible, they fearlessly and loudly proclaimed, and they succeeded in turning the world upside down ! The little one became a thousand, and within two centuries they became so numerous and so influential that they could have conquered the Roman world by dint of military prowess, if they had been disposed to do so. But the sword they hated, not merely as a weapon of offence, but even as a weapon of defence.

Milner, in his *Church History*, triumphantly proves that, when the later persecutions were raging, if Christians had been desirous to retaliate they might easily have organised an army before which that of imperial Rome would have fled somewhat in the manner in which we saw the other day the forces of France retreating before the colossal army of Prussia. But their religion inculcated patience under oppression, and they were true to its principles. Their success, unexampled and astounding, was the success of truth, and they laid the Roman Empire under their feet by simply proclaiming, and nobly illustrating in their lives, the Word of God.

6 The last point we shall consider is the insuperable and appalling character of the obstacles which the first preachers of the cross had to face and surmount. We have already pointed out a few of the difficulties which proceeded from the nature of the truths they proclaimed and the character of the sacrifices they demanded from those who were willing publicly to embrace this singular faith.

The first preachers of Christianity placed themselves, and could not but place themselves, in a position of implacable hostility to the world, its prevalent religions, its boasted philosophy, its current habitudes of life and modes of thought. Christianity could not flourish side by side with the systems of faith, the phases of thought, and the conditions of life with which it came in contact—could not be content with a niche in the hydra-headed pantheon of

heathenism, a little shelter in the groves of philosophy, and a little recognition in the busy scenes of public, and in the quiet recesses of private life

It declared a war of extermination against the world and its ways and demanded an unconditional surrender of its current principles, its darling precepts, and its favourite amusements. The pomp of royalty, the pride of birth, the lustre of learning, the glamour of fame, the prestige of an ostentatious piety, all things prized by men, all things considered essential to their welfare here and happiness hereafter, must be laid at its feet, or it would fight against all, suppress all, annihilate all. Is it a wonder that the mild and tolerant spirit of ancient polytheism, idolised by Gibbon, vanished when this uncompromising system had to be opposed, and that the world and its votaries, both refined and unrefined, became its sworn enemies?

All classes of people, from the monarch on the throne to the manacled criminal in the dungeon, all orders of society, from those who speculated in the solitude of philosophic retirement to those who chattered and quarrelled in noisy thoroughfares, men, women, and children, were marshalled against Christianity. The popular fury against this "un-social" creed knew no bounds, and it was fed and kept in a state of feverish excitement by means of horrid rumours circulated by designing men to the prejudice of its champions and professors. They were believed to be the irreconcilable enemies of humanity in secret league with the malignant demons of the lower world, wizards and witches who committed unmentionable crimes in dark caverns, and fed upon their own innocent children with cannibal voracity, and boiled terrible things in terrible cauldrons in terrible places! All public calamities, famines, pestilences, and conflagrations, that which blighted their fields, that which desolated their houses, and that which tortured their bodies, were ascribed to their malice and frightful incantations,

Public animosity was excited against them, and public rage poured forth its vials of wrath on their devoted heads

But the unreasoning fury of the populace was not the only thing they had to face Truly, the kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ Persecutions commenced by imperial edicts, and rendered doubly furious by the cruelty of provincial rulers and the barbarity of shoals of informers and spies—tortures such as human ingenuity could devise and Satanic malice could inflict—bloodthirsty animals rendered savage by keen hunger let loose to kill and to devour amid the plaudits of spectators scarcely less savage than they—furnaces heated seven times to consume human beings plunged into them—the red-hot iron chair, the gibbet, and the block—these were directed against the rising faith Through all this persecution Christianity marched forward from victory to victory till it ascended to the throne of the Cæsars Success such as foreshadowed its universal triumph, as decidedly as the stupendous miracles of Christ had betokened its Divine origin, attended its banner

Now, to conclude, this stupendous progress of Christianity, in spite of the improbable character of the facts and truths affirmed and inculcated, the appalling nature of the sacrifices demanded, the inadequacy and insufficiency of the agency and means employed, and the overwhelming difficulties overcome and surmounted, is itself a miracle, and can be accounted for only by the special intervention of the Arm of the Almighty

All attempts to explain it by a simple reference to human means have failed as egregiously as that of Gibbon, who, by a strange inconsistency, mentions among the causes of the propagation of Christianity things which were eminently calculated to check and impede its progress Whether the perpetuation of the miraculous powers bestowed on the

apostles and then brethren on the day of Pentecost throughout the first three centuries of the Christian era be conceded or not, some direct miraculous intervention must be assumed ere the unparalleled triumph of this religion over unparalleled difficulties can be satisfactorily accounted for. Christianity, we maintain, was Divine in its origin and Divine in its progress, its very propagation and present ascendancy prove the genuineness of the miracles connected with it.

XII.

THE ASCENDENCY OF CHRISTIANITY.

IN our last lecture we endeavoured to prove that the early progress of Christianity was itself a stupendous miracle, and tended to prove the genuineness of the miracles connected with the life of Christ. In this lecture we have to prove that the present ascendancy of Christianity is also a stupendous miracle, and may be brought forward in corroboration or confirmation of the miraculous accounts contained in the Gospels.

The question has often been asked, by our own countrymen as well as by European infidels, Why are not miracles wrought now? The necessity for miraculous intervention is as paramount now as in apostolic times, unbelief is as strong, and the natural reason of man is, on the whole, as decidedly prejudiced against Christianity. Why does not God now show His ability to interfere with the laws of nature in acts of power such as those which signalised the lives of His messengers sent to instruct the world in ancient times?

Now, we are no more bound to answer this question than the scientific man is bound to explain why God does not in these days create the huge animals, the mammoth, the mastodon, and the ichthyosaurus, which flourished in some

bygone geological era, or the ethnologist is bound to explain why a Shakespeare does not appear in every age and every country. But some reasons may be suggested to show why miracles are not wrought with the profusion with which they have at times been wrought in ages gone by. That they are *never* wrought in these days is a proposition which, though often stated with oracular assurance, cannot positively be proved.

The main object of miraculous interpositions is to usher in a new revelation, or a new dispensation or phase of a standing revelation, to popularise and spread new truths and new ideas. So long as such truths and such ideas are not fitted to propagate themselves by virtue of their inherent excellence or force, they need an external impetus, the propelling power of a series of Divine interventions. But when they are strong enough to make progress unaided, all adventitious help is necessarily withdrawn. As long as a child is unable to walk without external aid, the support of leading-strings is indispensable, but after it has learned to walk, the adventitious help is necessarily withdrawn. Christianity is not now in its infancy, and does not therefore need the leading strings of miraculous interpositions to force its way through the pathway of time.

The promises recorded in the New Testament regarding continuance of miraculous powers cannot possibly be unshackled by limitations of country or time. In a country where Christianity is the prevalent religion, miracles fitted to cause it to prevail are, of course, not needed. And a time is coming when, the Christianisation of the world being an accomplished fact, a series of Divine interventions, having for its object the propagation and ultimate triumph of the religion of Christ, will be superfluous, and consequently an impossibility. These identical promises become less and less applicable to the exigencies of Christian progress as ages roll on, and when Christianity becomes the prevalent

religion of the world, and triumphs over all forms of unbelief, they will entirely cease to be necessary at all

Miracles are not now necessary as they were in the days of our Lord, because the present ascendancy of Christianity is itself a miracle more stupendous than any recorded in Holy Writ. We cannot consider its lofty status, the trophies scattered around it, and the successes and triumphs it is now achieving, without being driven, by a logical necessity, to the conclusion that God has been and is with it, and that it is now being spread, as it was in its early stages, by His unlimited and illimitable power. But as the progress of Christianity means now, as it did in apostolic times, the progress of a belief in the supernatural, its present status is an argument in favour of miraculous facts connected with it. Let us consider the following points

1 The unparalleled ascendancy of Christianity in the world in these days of progress and development

2 Its incalculable moral influence, together with the moral revolution it has accomplished

3 Its apparent vitality and indestructibility

4 Its rapid march to universal dominion, as is indicated in the progress it is making in all parts of the world, both civilised and uncivilised

But before entering upon a fair discussion of these points, it is necessary for us to explain what we mean, or rather what is ordinarily and most properly meant by Christianity, or the religion of Christ. It is the fashion in these days to etherealise current systems of religion and current phases of thought. Primitive nature-worship, gross polytheism, and even fetishism of the most abject type, are all spiritualised into something consonant to reason and common sense, and fitted to develop and train the devotional feelings of our nature.

But the work of subtilising things material and gross into things immaterial and spiritual has not been confined to

systems of faith which are apparently sensual, and creeds which are obviously of the earth, earthy. This etherealising process has been extended to a religion which is spiritual, a creed which is philosophical and reasonable, and a worship which is pure and sublime. Christianity, in fine, has been spiritualised by the devotees of philosophy and science, its supernatural excrescences have been lopped off, and it has been reduced by processes of reasoning to a system approved by reason and upheld by common sense.

This rationalistic Christianity is allowed to be permanent and all-conquering, and its triumph over the dogma and creed—universally, but very foolishly, received in Christendom—is represented as a certainty. Christianity thus spiritualised, or rather *unchristianised*, has nothing inconsistent with reason or philosophy, presents no creed to scandalise our moral sense, no law to bind our thoughts and feelings, and no worship to interfere with the freedom of our devotional enthusiasm.

The two doctrines by means of which it renovates the heart and regenerates the world are, the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. This subtle and ethereal system, eulogised in the philosophy and poetry of a class of writers, is not the religion which we mean by Christianity. That which we call Christianity is a creed, boasts of a paper revelation and a dogmatic theology, a law formidable and universally obligatory, and a worship pure, sublime, but not the less external.

The two vaunted doctrines of the day into which it is made to shrink do not form its main part—are, properly speaking, no portions of what may be called its essence. They are taken for granted, rather than revealed by it. It is true that Christianity has quickened and popularised the ideas of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, but as they lie fossilised and embedded beneath impenetrable outer coverings of superstition in every known

religion, they cannot be said to have been discovered by it

They can be called its peculiar property only in the sense of their having been recognised, disinterred, energised, and rendered operative by it. But they form, we repeat, no part of its *essence*, its peculiar God-given dogma, that portion of its theology which is supernatural, which it reveals and illustrates, line upon line, precept upon precept, while taking the ordinary truths of what is called natural religion, among which they occupy a prominent place, for granted

The essence of Christianity consists of the three R's, Ruin, Redemption, and Regeneration—man's complete depravity in consequence of the fall of our first parents, his restoration to Divine favour in consequence of the satisfaction rendered to the justly offended Lawgiver by the blood of the new covenant shed on the heights of Calvary, and his regeneration in consequence of the indwelling operations of the Holy Spirit. This old-fashioned Christianity, with its supernatural creed, supernaturally revealed and supernaturally propagated, is the religion the indestructibility and ultimate universal triumph of which we desire to set forth

We repeat this at the risk of being considered tedious, because the triumph of this system, not of that advocated by Rationalists, proves the truth of the miracles recorded in the Gospels

† The present ascendancy of Christianity is a reality so prominent, so patent, and so indisputable, that an attempt to exhibit it by a formal process of reasoning may be stigmatised as superfluous

Christianity is the religion of the mightiest races, the most civilised nations, and the most ingenious peoples of the globe. It is in one important and obvious respect no longer a militant faith, fighting its way from obscurity to light, from poverty to wealth, from contempt to respect and veneration

It is the triumphant and dominant faith of the world, and represents and commands its power, its wealth, its pomp, and its magnificence. It has its learning and science with all their trains of discoveries and inventions, and the ten thousand blessings they have scattered around us, laid as tribute at its feet.

It has realised the wildest dreams and the most extravagant conceptions of mythology and fable, and nations mighty and strong are enjoying under its shade a prosperity, a profusion of wealth and influence, such as in ancient times would have been associated with magic wands rather than with human efforts and human contrivances. Its merchant vessels are seen in all seas, its flag is respected on every shore, and its professors have a sort of charmed life both among the snows of the polar regions and in the sandy wastes of equatorial countries.

There is no trifling or playing with it! Hate it by all means, but its proportions are so gigantic, and its appearance is so full of grace and majesty, that a humble bow of reverence must conceal your antipathy, simply to screen you from the charge of incurable insanity. The more palpably, the more loudly you declaim against it, the more loudly do you proclaim your own madness. Attack it you may—but your attacks must be sinister, not open, concealed under a drapery of fine compliments, not embittered by sweeping condemnation and undisguised abuse.

The infidels of the day are wise in their day and generation, and do not walk in the footsteps of a Voltaire and a Paine. They know very well that they would be laughed at and hooted as consummate fools, if they only ventured to bespatter the religion of Christ with abuse, as their prototypes had done before them. They therefore adopt the language of compliment, the smart periods of a Parker, the glowing eloquence of a Rénan, the imposing mysteriousness of a Carlyle, even when they are engaged in undermining its

foundations and battering down its walls So prominent is the figure of Christianity, so august its influence, so decided the prepossessions, if not anything higher, in its favour, that no *sensible* man, no man pretending to a moderate education and average attainment, would dare hit it on the face

What a contrast between its present position, which compels even modern enemies to conceal their malignity under varieties of complimentary phrases and insincere eulogy, and its position when, ignored by the world generally and despised by the few conversant with its undeveloped elements, it achieved its first triumphs in an obscure corner of the world, and among a people held in universal contempt !

Even in mere numerical strength, Christianity distances all the religions of the world, excepting Buddhism, or the congeries of beliefs improperly called Buddhism It claims as its own somewhat less than a third portion of the population of the globe, the huge figures 375,000,000 showing the numbers by whom its sway is acknowledged The only religion which can match it in numbers is Buddhism, that subtle and unsubstantial faith, which is Proteus-like in its forms, flexible in its spirit, and accommodating in its principles

But the resemblance between Christianity and Buddhism stops here What a contrast between the populations owned by the one and the peoples held in subjection by the other ! The most enterprising and ingenious races of the world, its most advanced stages of civilisation, its finest forms of life, its most glorious fruits of industry and arts, and its most imposing phases of thought, represent the vigour and vitality of the religion of Christ, while effete nationalities and decrepid and decaying types of civilisation set forth the feebleness and senility of the other

Thibet, Burmah, Arracan, China, and Japan are, though busy hives of population, countries sunk in degradation

both moral and social, whereas Europe and America are full of youthful vigour, intellectual activity, and moral earnestness. So that, if Buddhism is on a par with Christianity in mere numerical strength, in every other respect, in the prestige of power and ascendancy of principle, it is as far below its rival as Zoroastrianism, which is numerically the feeblest of the prominent religions of the world, or Hinduism, which is believed by its own champions and professors to be on the decline.

The power and ascendancy of Christianity are noticeable in the whole world. The keys of the world are in its hands. It possesses the outposts of almost every country, great or small, on the surface of the globe. Two Christian Powers have to all intents and purposes divided the whole of Asia, the most ancient and the most populous of the main divisions of the earth, between themselves. A few Christian colonies guard the outposts of Australasia and Africa, and overawe their populations so far as to keep the disturbances occasioned by their wild character and savage propensities within proper bounds.

Europe is Christian to the very core, and the Sick Man there, recently brought to the verge of the grave, tosses and languishes in his bed by sufferance more than by any power which he can oppose to the dread avalanche of Christian domination. In America heathenism is retiring into the caves and dens of the world before the sweeping march of Christian civilisation, while there is not a known island in the Polynesian Seas which has not been taught to bow to the prestige and respect the rights of the Christian Powers.

Christianity is the Lord Paramount, and all the other religions of the world are to all intents and purposes its vassals. The most prominent moral phenomenon of the world is the prestige which Christianity has acquired after eighteen centuries of conflict and progress, and which Christianity

maintains with a vigour as fresh as that which she exhibited when she waged her infant wars against the combined powers of the world

Let us observe, further, that this ascendancy is maintained undiminished in lustre in the most enlightened era of the world's history. The argument we are entering upon will be best understood by those who have an insight into the workings of the debating clubs which are set up by the thousand in this country by raw schoolboys. One of the problems discussed in these controversial meetings is, whether Alexander or Hannibal was the greater general, and the Hannibalsians glibly maintain that their hero was the greater because he overcame forces much more formidable than those which retreated in disorder and confusion before the disciplined valour of Alexander's army.

Now, though much of what is asserted and maintained in these clubs is pure nonsense, the argument indicated is, so far as it holds good, conclusive. Christianity is on the ascendant in the most enlightened countries and in the most enlightened age of the world.

Buddhism became the dominant faith of vast countries and of busy hives of population at a time when the world was sunk in ignorance, when philosophy was fanciful and fantastic, when experimental science was scarcely appreciated, when the arts were undeveloped, and when the state of society bore evident traces of wildness and barbarism.

The success of Mohammedanism was also achieved in a period of darkness, and among peoples sunk in ignorance and superstition. Such religions as Hinduism and Parsism flourished and attained to eminence and glory in prehistoric times—that is, in times when the moral darkness of the world was only relieved by a few glimmerings of truth which had been handed down by a traditional revelation descending from our first parents.

Even the first triumphs of Christianity were won in times

which, though marvellously enlightened compared to those which had preceded them, were, in comparison with our own, rude and barbarous. But Christianity now flourishes, marches forward, and conquers in countries which fairly represent all the improvement and worth of this era of progress.

We shall have occasion to refer to this feature of the religion of Christ under another heading, but meanwhile we ask our readers to observe that, while the other religions of the world flourish in countries which have not marched out of the darkness of barbarous times, and are, properly speaking, unworthy of the age, Christianity flourishes alongside of, and imparts a wholesome impetus to, its vigorous spirit of progress and development. The other religions live indeed in the nineteenth century, but in the countries which do not exhibit the progress of the first three centuries of the Christian era, but Christianity is the ascendant faith of this era of progress.

2 Let us now look to the incalculable and boundless moral influence of Christianity, and endeavour to measure the height and depth, the length and breadth of the great moral revolution it has accomplished. Christianity has certainly been an ally and patron of what is called material civilisation, but material civilisation is not its *forte*.

Material civilisation can flourish and luxuriate when entirely dissociated from its sublime doctrine and benevolent morality. It flourished in Egypt and attained a high degree of development when Christianity existed only in a few unrecognised types and obscure prophecies, and the pyramids and colossal statues of that country, before which even modern science stands confounded, show its unprecedented activity even in those prehistoric times. It flourished and luxuriated in Greece, when the era of prophetic vision had terminated, and the era of Messianic glory had not dawned, and the glorious remains of its architecture and sculpture, its poetry

and philosophy, which stimulate the literary enthusiasm of the age, prove that in some points it reached a goal beyond which it is not possible to carry it

Material civilisation can prosper and move forward without the aid of a pure and lofty faith, and invariably discloses a spirit of arrogance and secularity such as seems to contravene the prominent teachings of Christianity. The imposing external civilisation of these days does not directly prove that the religion with which it is associated is necessarily Divine, the only legitimate conclusion deducible being that Christianity is not inconsistent with it, and that the devotees of luxury cannot properly represent it as in this respect behind the age.

But it must nevertheless be admitted that even material civilisation has derived its most amiable features from Christianity—viz, its benevolence and universality. The predominant feature of ancient civilisation was selfishness, a narrow, exclusive spirit, which circumscribed its blessings within narrow limits and confined them, even within these, to particular and favoured classes of society. The comforts of life, the pleasures of literature and science, were the monopoly of the few, not the common property of the many, and the advocates of civilisation in those days of general darkness were the benefactors of particular classes of society, not the benefactors in any sense of mankind at large.

But Christian benevolence has changed all this, and material civilisation, receiving an impetus from it, glories in being liberal and diffusive, rather than exclusive and selfish. Not only are the comforts of life, the blessings of political liberty, and the higher pleasures of literature and science multiplied, but scattered broadcast, a thing incompatible with the narrow and exclusive spirit of ancient civilisation.

But moral civilisation is the *forte*, so to speak, of Christianity, and the moral revolution it has accomplished is as astounding as the most astounding triumphs of material

civilisation The contrast between the state of moral perception and moral feeling as they exist and manifest themselves now, and the state of moral perception and moral feeling as they existed and operated about the time of Christ, is as decided and marked as the contrast between this age of railways and telegraphs and the time when the fleetest conveyance known was a clumsy cart drawn by a couple of lazy bullocks

Material civilisation affects the senses, and its progress is noticed and admired much more readily than the progress of moral civilisation, which is cognised by the intellect and appreciated by reason But if a person takes the trouble of reading a book like Suetonius's *Lives of the Cæsars*, and of noticing the enormity of the vices and crimes which were perpetrated in broad daylight, and under the noses of innumerable spectators, by persons of position and influence, and then if he contrasts the moral obtuseness, obscenity, and degradation of those days with the purity of thought and feeling apparent in these times, he will be driven to the conclusion that the progress which moral civilisation has made under the guidance of Christianity is even more astonishing than the progress in the useful and ornamental arts which it is the fashion to speak of in glowing terms of eulogy

The age which witnessed the rise and first triumphs of Christianity was emphatically an age of unrestrained and unblushing licentiousness. Vice not merely reigned, but was idolised by poets, and believed to be the most amiable feature in the character of the gods Bloodshed was so common, and formed such a large portion of public amusements, that the Romans would certainly have died of dullness if some malignant star had put a stop to it A lower depth of moral degradation than what pervaded all ranks of society, and culminated in monsters like Nero and Caligula, cannot be conceived

Human philosophy, which had been almost brought to perfection by Socrates and Plato, Epictetus and Zeno, could not have had a fairer trial, a more splendid occasion to display its regenerating power. But its subtleties and sophisms might gratify human pride and human vanity, but could not counteract social corruption, and, instead of elevating society, it stereotyped its degradation by intertwining with the current maxims of vice its own principles of theoretic atheism and practical Epicureanism.

At last, when all remedies failed, and human philosophy combined with human religions to produce a moral darkness such as might be felt, the religion of Christ undertook the important work of renovating and reforming society. As soon as it succeeded in asserting its ascendancy, it suppressed gladiatorial shows, made it impossible for men, women, and children to gloat over the sufferings of chained criminals torn to pieces and devoured by hungry and infuriated wild beasts, and published penal edicts to put down the crime of exposing infants to death.

Who can properly appreciate the change it has since wrought? It has suppressed polygamy, and made marriage an institution of purity, unknown in the chastest homes of antiquity. It has elevated the position of woman, and made her a companion, not a slave, of man. It has raised the lower orders of society from the contempt and degradation attached to them by primitive usage, and given them a position worthy of the dignity of the nature with which God has endowed them.

It has nearly extinguished slavery and serfage in the almost unbounded circle of its influence. It has made human life so valuable that the greatest tyrant, a Nero of modern times, cannot play with it without exposing himself to the most furious assaults of public opinion. It has humanised the spirit of war and mitigated its horrors. It has regenerated prison discipline and converted dungeons

into penitentiaries and reformatories. It has erected magnificent hospitals for the sick and the wounded, and raised innumerable establishments to take care of the widow and the orphan. Its humanitarian institutions, its lazaret houses and pauper asylums, its missionary societies and benevolent associations, embody a spirit of active philanthropy as far above that of the religions and philosophies of the world as heaven is above earth.

Nor must we forget the patent fact, that it has moulded characters which, in their varied excellence and sublime holiness, have not been rivalled by any the world has developed and matured, and transformed the vilest of men, those whom the other religions of the world have considered and represented as irreclaimable, not merely into honest citizens, but into bright examples of piety and benevolence.

In estimating the moral influence of Christianity, we must not forget to take notice of the healthy public opinion it has created. When our Brahmo friends speak so glibly of intuition, moral sense or conscience, they certainly make use of terms which are on the whole vague, but it is not impossible to ascertain what they mean by them. They cannot be supposed unwise or obstinate enough to maintain that the moral consciousness of every individual reveals to him or cognises all the religious truths essential to his peace here and happiness hereafter. Nor can they mean that the intuition of every nation or community is fitted, without the slightest external aid, to bring in that wholesome change in moral sentiment which they foreshadow in such glowing prophetic utterances.

They certainly rely, though they may not acknowledge that they do rely, on what may be called the enlightened judgment of Europe for a perennial supply of the truths and principles which are in their opinion likely to make the forms of worship sustained by the prevalent creeds of the world, things of the past. But they forget the patent truth,

that the enlightened judgment of Europe is, in spite of the bluster and bravado of progressive thinkers, the creation of Christianity, and its counterpart cannot be found in regions into which the sublime truths of that heaven-bestowed religion have not penetrated

Christianity has not merely revolutionised the morals of society, but raised up a moral standard, a robust and healthy public opinion, before which vice is retreating into obscurity, and the existing fashionable evils of the day are fast becoming out of date. No sensible man will deny that vices and evils of vast proportions and intense malignity prevail in countries called Christian, but they flourish in spite of the public opinion which Christianity has created, and are being fast crippled and paralysed by its influence.

It is impossible to mention a single thing which, in its renovating influence and formative efficacy, can bear the slightest resemblance to this mighty power called the Fourth and the greatest of the Estates. If there is one thing which governs the civilised world more effectively than another, it is its Public Opinion, which, properly speaking, guides the politics and morals of the world, and this public opinion is the creation of Christianity. It should, moreover, be borne in mind that the tendency of Christianity to secure the highest temporal and spiritual well-being of humanity is as obvious as the tendency of virtue to promote genuine happiness.

There are varieties of circumstances which counteract, directly or indirectly, this inherent beneficent tendency of the religion of Christ, but in proportion as the opposing forces are being neutralised and the obstacles removed, in that degree is it found eminently fitted by its innate influence to remove the woes of mankind and promote their highest good. In a world like our own, where sin predominates, the development of that purity and bliss which Christianity is fitted to secure must needs be checked, but its power to

overcome opposition and leave its own benevolent spirit to work out the reformation of the world, and its consequent transformation from a vale of tears into an abode of peace and joy, is evident in the fact that, wherever it prevails even imperfectly, the desert blooms as the rose, the evils of life are mitigated, and holiness and happiness take the place of vice and misery

Contrast this benevolent tendency of the religion of Christ with the tendencies of the other religions of the world, and its infinite superiority will be at once apparent. The innate tendency of Brahmanism is to perpetuate the caste system, if not anything worse, to stereotype the ascendancy of a dominant class, and the degradation of the inferior orders of society. The tendency of Mohammedanism is to perpetuate polygamy, and to gratify the cravings of a prurient disposition by holding out the prospect of a paradise of carnality and licentiousness. The tendency of Buddhism, as it was originally developed in the aphorisms of Sakya Muni, is to undermine the very foundations of virtue by fostering the spirit of theoretic atheism and practical discontent.

Not so the tendency of the religion of Christ. It promotes the happiness of mankind by satisfying the demands and yearnings of their noble though fallen nature, and the reformation it effects makes it possible for us to look forward with hope and assurance to the millennium of peace and plenty, the prospect of which it holds out in its prophetic declarations.

3 Let us, in the third place, take into consideration its apparent vitality and indestructibility. Christianity apart, the religions of the world are in a pitiable condition, indicative of decay and disgrace, of loss of strength, loss of prestige, and loss of everything likely to promise long life and vigorous sway on the part of any one of them. They are all retreating in great disorder before the triumphant march

of modern civilisation The light of the age has only to appear in a country, and its dominant religion retreats, conceals itself where its rays do not reach, and ultimately vanishes into thin air when it becomes predominant

Here in India no fact is so conspicuous as the flight of Hinduism before the rapid progress of the knowledge and science which a foreign Government has introduced, confessedly with the object of not interfering with its principles, and of leaving its ancient domination uninjured and intact But in this matter the action of the Government is something like the action it has invariably taken for its own political aggrandisement The more loudly it has professed its determination not to enlarge the boundary lines of its empire, the more surely something or other has occurred to gratify its lust of conquest, extend its ascendancy, and raise its prestige

In like manner, the more loudly it has declared its intention not to interfere with the dominant religions of the country, the more surely it has, by bringing in the knowledge and civilisation of the nineteenth century, not merely curtailed their sway and circumscribed their influence, but made their very existence an impossibility And he will by no means be regarded as a very bold prophet who predicts the complete extinction of their authority and influence, consequent on the complete ascendancy of the civilisation before which they are retreating And the vestiges of decay, the marks of defeat and disgrace noticeable in Hinduism, are observable in every religion on the surface of the globe, the faith of Christendom alone excepted

Wherever in regions beyond its boundaries the civilisation of the nineteenth century makes progress, it drives before it the dominant religions with which it comes in contact Mohammedanism, Buddhism, Confucianism, the degrading religions of Africa, and the monstrous beliefs scattered over the islands which geographers group into the fifth great division

of the globe, are all in full retreat before the march of civilisation, and their days apparently are numbered. Such, however, is not the case with Christianity, which is the only religion that stands the light of true knowledge, and controls the dominant ideas of the age.

The indestructibility of the religion of Christ appears not only from its ability to stand that light, which is apparently running the prestige of all its rivals, both great and small, but from the fact that there is nothing in this boasted age fitted to destroy it. The philosophical speculations of the age are but improved editions of those speculations which she has again and again overcome and neutralised, and the objections cast in its teeth are but ghosts of the objections which she has refuted and scattered to the winds times without number. It does not require much penetration to see that such monstrosities as Comtism and materialism cannot even for a moment stand a conflict with the lofty truths and benevolent maxims of Christianity. And none but weak minds can be persuaded to think that a theism which borrows its most durable truths and most amiable features from its own repertory of dogmas and precepts, can successfully dispute its claims and diminish its glory.

All the philosophical and moral speculations of the age being set aside as old and threadbare, there is one thing which has been represented as a new and formidable opponent of Christianity—viz., the boasted Science of the age. That science is a peculiarity, a speciality, a characteristic feature of this age, may be admitted. While Hegelianism, Comtism, Kantism, and Parkerism existed in some form or other in days gone by, are only old lines of speculation revived under new names and associated with new modes of expression, science is in reality a new thing, and was unknown in the times when the first triumphs of Christianity were won.

Then again, science is exact knowledge, not merely vain

speculation, and if it could be made really to run counter to the positive declarations of the Christian faith, its opposition would be decidedly subversive of its ascendancy and influence

But science has not, properly speaking, even attempted to undermine and destroy the citadel of Christianity. It has merely destroyed the outworks raised by man around that citadel. It has destroyed the traditional beliefs of the Church without even attempting an attack on the fundamentals of the religion of Christ and their sacred surroundings.

For instance, the Church believed in the Ptolemaic system of astronomy, and science has scattered that belief to the winds. But the Bible never inculcated that system and fostered that belief, and consequently is not affected by the completeness with which it has been destroyed. The Church failed to understand the cosmogony of Moses, and geology directed its powerful weapons against its misapprehensions and misrepresentations. But when these were thrown out of the way, a wonderful harmony was discovered between the order of creation as disclosed by geology and the order of creation as presented in the opening chapter of Genesis.

And even if Geology could assure us by strict scientific demonstrations, not by crazy theories, that human beings existed and flourished before the creation of Adam and Eve, it would merely overturn a received opinion of the Church, not an express declaration of the Bible, the opinion, viz., that Adam was the fountain-head of humanity in general, and not the progenitor of the present species of the *genus homo*, several species of which might have lived and disappeared before his appearance.

Ethnology demands a longer period than is allowed by the received chronology of the Church to account for the mental and physical diversities noticeable among the

different races and nations occupying the world, but as the received chronology evidently does violence to the principle which pervades the genealogies of the Scriptures, the principle of leaving gaps unbridged to secure brevity and unity, ethnology militates against *our* views, not against Bible declarations

Thus, true science is merely exploding the traditions of the Church without even attempting an attack on the majestic citadel of revealed truth, between which and its discoveries, be it observed, there is a harmony so wonderful that the God of Nature cannot but clearly appear to be the same as the God of the Bible

There is nothing in the age fitted to lower the prestige or circumscribe the ascendancy of Christianity, while there is much to destroy the influence and occasion the death of every other religion on the surface of the globe. All other religions are apparently decrepid and moribund, but Christianity is not merely fraught with energy and vitality, but is indestructible

There is another feature which reveals its indestructibility—viz, its perfect adaptability to those wants of humanity which are permanent and indestructible. The religion of those people who believe in the doctrines of the Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of man, and nothing more, may be suited to an imaginary sphere like Utopia, but is in some respects out of place in this sin-stricken and sin-deformed world of ours. Here, the ghastly figure of sin is ubiquitous, and an acceptable sacrifice or a remedy for sin is peremptorily demanded by all the moral conditions of which we can take cognisance. Blood and fire are the most prominent features of all the religions which, whether true or false, betoken with the greatest certitude the religious wants of humanity

An atonement for sin, a free amnesty and the regenerating influences of the Spirit of God—man under all

circumstances and in all conditions cries—oh, how plaintively! oh, how earnestly! cries for these, and his cries are embodied in all the theology he possesses, in all the ceremonies he performs, and all the penances he inflicts upon his-body and mind His wants, however, his highest aspirations and noblest yearnings, are satisfied nowhere but in Christianity, which offers a gratuitous pardon purchased by the blood which can take away sin, and a Living Saviour to protect and guide him, to be a Source of life and light in him and a Shield of defence around him The wants of humanity are satisfied only by Christianity, and as these are indestructible, that which is adapted to satisfy them, that without which they can never be satisfied, must needs be indestructible

4. And now let us advert to the last point of our lecture—viz, that the present successes of Christianity are grand and astounding enough to foreshadow its ultimate universal empire The foregoing points of our discourse have taken up so much of our space that we have really very little left to dilate on this concluding element of the argument we have feebly endeavoured to set forth But fortunately it is not necessary for us to do more than point out the notorious fact that, while all the other religions of the world are entangled in what may be called the meshes of stagnation, Christianity is progressive, engaged in extending its sway and benign influence with the energy and vigour it displayed when it found the whole world arrayed against its incipient growth Wherever it goes it conquers, and its triumphant progress is marked by trophies such as are eminently fitted to prove its Divine origin

The desert blooming as the rose, the thorn converted into the myrtle, naked savages appearing clothed and in their right minds, heartless cannibals changed into human beings full of tender compassion and genuine love, nations regenerated, races raised to the highest pitch of material

and moral civilisation,—let all the other religions of the world put together bring forward such triumphs and we shall be forced to admit that the interval between them and our heaven-bestowed religion is not considerable

To these facts must be added one which is even more conclusive—viz, that all the religions of the world are retiring before it, leaving it victorious in the field. The picture of Dagon falling flat before the Ark of the Covenant is reproduced where there is even a momentary contest between the religion of Christ and the faith and philosophies of the world. Does not this fact indicate that Christianity is destined to conquer and conquer till the knowledge of Jesus Christ and Him crucified shall fill the whole world as the waters cover the sea?

We cannot think of the triumphs which Christianity has achieved and those with which its progress in these days is accompanied,—we cannot think of the beautiful spirit of civilisation which has sprung from it, and the stupendous moral revolution it has accomplished,—without being compelled by a logical necessity to admit its Divine origin, and the genuineness of the miraculous facts associated with it. If the supernatural basis of Christianity were swept away the omnipotent influence it has exercised over the destinies of humanity, over its external circumstances as well as over its inmost thoughts, over the sphere of its outer as well as within the sanctuary of its inner life, would be an inscrutable and inexplicable mystery.

The moral regeneration of the world is the phenomenon which Christianity places before us, and which we are called upon to explain on legitimate principles. To what is this grand phenomenon, this glorious change, to be ascribed? To a series of lies, fables, mythical embellishments, and legendary exaggerations, or to a series of well-attested supernatural facts? These are the alternatives placed before us, and, surely, much ingenuity or reasoning

is not needed to see which of these we ought to adopt. We cannot believe that the moral regeneration of the world has proceeded either from a series of impudent frauds, or from a series of unaccountable mistakes, and hence we are driven to the conclusion that the miraculous stories associated with Christianity are authentic and reliable narratives of indisputable facts. The genuineness of the miracles of Christ must be taken for granted ere the glorious trophies scattered on the path, and clustering around what may be called the body of Christianity, can be explained.

The Church of Christ itself proves the truth of His miracles by the prominence of position and ascendancy of influence to which it has attained. It also proves their genuineness by its long-standing institutions and ordinances. Leslie, in his *Short and Easy Method with the Deists*, lays down the following rules as fitted, when found conjoined in "a matter of fact," to prove its genuineness—"1st, That the matter of fact be such, as that men's outward senses, their eyes and ears, may be judges of it, 2nd, that it be done publicly in the face of the world, 3rd, that not only public monuments be kept up in memory of it, but some outward actions to be performed, 4th, that such monuments and such actions and observances be instituted and do commence from the time that the matter of fact was done."

It is evident that the first two rules are applicable to the miracles of Christ, which were calculated to make an impression upon the senses, and wrought publicly in the face of the world. And the institutions and ordinances of the Church, inaugurated in apostolic times, prove the genuineness of the aforesaid miracles. The observance of Sunday, according to a modification of a standing commandment of the decalogue effected in apostolic times, commemorates the resurrection of Christ. The rite of baptism symbolises His death as well as His resurrection, while the eucharist

shows forth His atoning sacrifice till He comes The Christian ministry, instituted also in apostolic times, preaches Christianity as a system presenting a series of supernatural facts rather than a tissue of doctrines, also shows the reality of the Christian miracles embodied The miracles in which these four marks of truth are conjoined cannot but be genuine

The well-known night journey of Mohammed was an event not calculated to make an impression upon the senses, and was, moreover, not wrought publicly, and the ordinances and observances of non-Christian religions were instituted long after the events the memory of which they are designed to perpetuate

Now let us summarise the conclusions arrived at The evidence in favour of the genuineness and authenticity of the New Testament, and its marvellous freedom from interpolation, proves the reality of the miracles The unexceptionable testimony of the original witnesses proves the reality of the miracles. The corroborative testimony of the other witnesses of apostolic and subsequent times—a testimony coming down in an ever-expanding stream to the present time—proves the reality of the miracles The character of Christ proves the reality of the miracles The early progress and present ascendancy of Christianity both prove the reality of the miracles The vast body of literature clustering around the Church, as well as its institutions and ordinances, prove the reality of the miracles Let a similar series of proofs be presented in favour of heathen miracles, and reasonable men will spontaneously exclaim—they are true !

XIII.

THE NATURAL EXPLANATION.

IN nothing is the spirit of modern rationalism more decided or more determined than in its emphatic and unequivocal negation or denial of the supernatural or miraculous element of our holy religion. The great champions of rationalism are wiser in their day and generation than many of the advocates of the religion which it is their ardent wish to undermine, in the proper sense of the term—that is, to destroy secretly and surreptitiously, rather than ostensibly or openly.

While many of the avowed friends of Christianity refuse to recognise the paramount importance of the stupendous miracles connected with it, they have been wise enough to look upon these wonders as its vital elements, not accidental, though gorgeous appendages. They have been wise enough to see the utter impossibility of gaining their object—viz, that of either annihilating the Christian faith, or converting it into a pure form of naturalism, without first bringing the miraculous story forming its substratum into contempt. And consequently they have made the miracles of our Lord the object of their best organised, most persevering and persistent, not to say vehement and furious attacks.

The quiet revolution the champions of rationalism have

to accomplish in the sphere of human thought is by no means one of small proportions or slender importance. As soon as their large and many-sided task is done, traditions hoary with age and embalmed amid the deepest feelings of reverence and love will vanish into thin air, and the current theology of the world will give place to those pure types of transcendentalism which it is their ardent desire to popularise and make prevalent. God is the soul and substance of the universe, the laws of nature are His unchangeable will actualised, providence is nothing more or less than its orderly, uniform, and necessary course, religion is social morality, prayer and praise are superfluous, and the only form of devotion permissible is the silent admiration with which we contemplate the harmonious operation of that complex system of forces in which we see the Divine Idea realised or transferred from the state of passivity into that of activity! These are the glorious ideas by which rationalism considers it its duty to supersede our grovelling conceptions of God and His government.

But how is this great revolution to be accomplished? How is this important change in the silent sphere of our thoughts and ideas to be realised? The first thing to be done, the first feat to be performed, is surely the complete eradication of our superstitious though honest belief in miracles in general, and those of our Lord in particular. And therefore rationalism has directed its sharpest, its most polished and deadly weapons against them. It has arrayed its wit, its learning, its science, philosophy, and criticism, the edge of its disquisition and the point of its logic, against that tendency of our nature which leads to our being easily duped by stories partaking of the marvellous or the miraculous.

It has had many a thunderbolt to launch against the different parts of Christianity—against its theory of inspiration its anthropomorphous ideas of God, its meek and

unassuming morality, its startling doctrines, and astounding paradoxes. But the bitter things it has said against these elements of our holy religion are sweetness itself compared with the rancour with which it has aspersed the supernatural facts connected with them. Its strongest expressions of disapprobation, its most powerful arguments, its most poignant sarcasms, and its most virulent tirades have been hurled against that current faith in the supernatural, on the ruins of which the grand edifice of modern transcendentalism is to be raised.

But in another respect also are the champions of rationalism wise in their day and generation. They are wise enough to see the absolute necessity of their accomplishing another, and, on the whole, a more difficult task, side by side with their work of bringing the miracles of Christ into disrepute. They are wise enough to see that their attempt to disprove or explain away the miracles of Christ, though one of paramount importance, is but a preliminary step, a step leading the mind as if by instinct to another, which might appropriately be called the finishing stroke. In plain English, they are convinced that they must follow their attempt to discredit the miracles of the New Testament with one fitted to divest the life of Christ of its supernatural elements.

Suppose the miracles of Christ are all reduced to ordinary events or converted into myths, is the difficulty in the way of rationalism so decidedly obviated that nothing remains to be explained? Is the way completely paved for the advancement and ascendancy of a religion which proclaims an impersonal God, the obliteration of moral distinctions, and the universal control of unmitigated fatalism? Not at all. The central figure of Christianity, the unique Life of the Lord of Glory, remains the wonder of wonders, the miracle of miracles! The Life of Christ, with the Divine image visibly and palpably impressed upon it, has

to be reduced to the low platform of an ordinary life ere the supernatural element of Christianity is completely swept away

It is not enough to explain away the miracles narrated in the Gospels and referred to in the Epistles by means of specious theories, such a proceeding would merely destroy the outworks of the citadel of the Christian faith. If Christianity is to be destroyed, not only must the miracles with which it is intertwined be disposed of, but its animating principle, its vitalising spirit, Jesus Christ Himself, must be rudely handled, shorn of His divinity, and held up to public view as a human being of like passions with ourselves. And this sacrilegious attempt the rationalists of Germany have not been slow to make

They have not merely placed the Gospel records under the relentless knife of their unsparing criticism—they have not merely pruned away therefrom whatever is calculated to impress a supernatural character upon them, but they have, with daring impiety, handled Him whose portraiture they faithfully present till the aureole or the halo of Divine glory is snatched away from His brow, and the Lord of Life and Light is changed into a frail man, dependent for His existence upon the preserving care of a superior Being

They have published numerous biographies of Christ, and in these they have presented Him in forms suited to or in accord with their corrupt passions and depraved tastes, just as idolaters have made their gods and goddesses in obedience to the dictates of, and after the patterns held up by their own degenerate natures and polluted feelings. One has made Him a pious Rabbi, spoilt by contact with the demoralising influences of His age and country, another has represented Him as a shrewd demagogue, taking advantage of prevalent mistakes and current aspirations, while a third has been guilty of the unspeakable frivolity, not to say execrable profanity, of painting Him as a Parisian

democrat, deriving solace from the society of beautiful women, though too thoroughly devoted to duty to be drawn astray by their charms !

These numerous and artistically executed "Lives of Christ" demonstrate that if His original biographers were left to themselves, or were not placed under the guidance and control of the inspiring Spirit of God, they would have, not merely failed to draw the consistent, unique, and sublime picture which is the glory of their records, but promulgated views at war with one another, and fitted to hold up a ludicrous combination of incompatible qualities, rather than a perfect and finished model of virtue and excellence

But why have the great champions of rationalism proceeded in a roundabout way? Why have they not, in their attempts to account for the miracles of Christ, adopted the simple method utilised by Middleton in his attempt to account for the alleged miracles of the post-Apostolic age? Various theories had been elaborated and promulgated, various explanations had been offered with reference to this huge body of miracles but Middleton made short work of current modes of accounting for them by simply tracing them to pious frauds. He boldly represented them as fables, and the authors by whom they had been reported and chronicled as pious deceivers, or pious men induced by good motives to practise deception

Now, why have not the great champions of rationalism followed the noble example set by this scholar of no mean reputation, though somewhat erratic in his habits of thought? Why have they not with equal courage represented the miracles attributed to Christ as fables, and the Apostles by whom they were promulgated as pious cheats? Why have they, instead of pursuing this obviously sensible course, taken the trouble of explaining what might otherwise have been so easily exposed to public ridicule? Why have they

resorted to animal magnetism, mesmerism, mythical invention, and legendary exaggeration, to get rid of the miraculous element in the New Testament, when they could have easily swept it away by a bold asseveration setting forth its fraudulent character? The proper answer to these questions indicates the magnitude or greatness of the change that has come over the spirit of infidelity since the publication of the *Wolfenbüttel Fragments* by Lessing, during the latter part of the last century

The champions of modern rationalism are by no means behind their prototypes of bygone ages in their dislike to or hatred of orthodox Christianity. But they are restrained from adopting the easy course pursued by their predecessors by feelings similar to those which some of the high caste contemporaries of our Lord displayed when they escaped by a death-like silence both the horns of the dilemma which they had been compelled by a puzzling question to face! Christ endeavoured to silence their captious criticism, as well as to expose their obduracy in resisting the light vouchsafed to them, by calling upon them to state what they thought of the baptism of John

His query placed before them a couple of alternatives, from either of which they were but too glad to effect a timely retreat. They were wise enough to perceive that if they admitted the prophetic mission of John the Baptist their want of belief in him would be very properly represented as inconsistent with their profession, and therefore unreasonable and absurd. They were also wise enough to apprehend that, if they represented John as a pretender or one who had presumptuously usurped the office of a prophet, they would be stoned by the people, who unanimously admitted his prophetic claims. So they escaped both the horns of the dilemma before them by simply holding their tongues

The apostles of rationalism are wise enough to perceive

that, in this late hour of the day, they cannot represent the miracles of Christ as fables, and their narrators as cheats and rogues, without bringing down upon their own heads the indignation, not to say the execration, of the entire civilised world. Time was when the authors of our Gospels could be assailed and aspersed in this rude and boisterous manner without a proper exposure of the gross ignorance involved in such a proceeding, but the criticism of the age has brought their fidelity as historians so prominently to light that it is now impossible for any person, great or small, to represent them as mere manufacturers of wild tales with impunity.

Therefore our rationalistic friends have had recourse to less obvious, and consequently less dangerous methods of solving the great problems which Gospel history places before them. They have had to rack their brains for specious arguments to explain away the miracles recorded therein, rather than for strong expressions to indicate their abhorrence of the fraud associated with them in the infidel writings of bygone ages. They have, in short, had to construct plausible theories to get rid of the difficulties heaped up in their path, and the ingenuity with which these have been elaborated and adorned is the greatest compliment that can possibly be paid to the Apostles, inasmuch as it represents their veracity, honesty, and fidelity as historians as invulnerable.

All this is predicable even more decidedly of the scrupulous care with which the advocates of rationalism avoid the very appearance of the levity and profanity with which their prototypes of bygone ages represented Christ as an impostor. The character of Christ has in these days been so carefully looked into, so thoroughly examined and scrutinised, and its spotless excellence so decidedly set forth, that an attempt to represent Him as a deceiver, in the teeth of this rigid analysis and its satisfactory result, is sure to be condemned in no measured language all over the civilised world.

Time was when attempt after attempt was made by persons reputed as men of learning, to assail the character of our Lord, to tarnish its unspeakable beauty, and to represent Him not only as a human being of like passions with ourselves, but as one decidedly below mediocrity in the scale of moral development. Time was when Christ was represented by a set of frivolous thinkers and shameless libertines, of whom Voltaire and Paine are fair specimens, not only as a mere man, but as a very bad man—not only as an impostor but as one of the worst pretenders that ever lived. But those days have happily gone by, and an attempt now made to hold up a picture of our Lord inconsistent with the supposition that He was decidedly the best man that ever lived, is sure to be stigmatised as deserving of the severest condemnation.

And so our friends of the rationalistic school have abandoned for ever the profane and scurrilous language of the self styled *illuminati* of France, and resorted to such plausible theories as are calculated to bring about the same result in a less obnoxious manner. They have learnt the art of speaking of Him in glowing terms of praise, of adorning Him with the chaplets of a glory almost Divine, and then of adroitly divesting Him of all genuine excellence by accusing Him, in gentle terms, of cherishing an immoderate self esteem and advancing extravagant claims.

It is our decided opinion that, if we look through the glittering phraseology with which their delineations of Christ are radiant, we shall discover a figure scarcely less amiable than that exposed to public ridicule by the profane wit of a Voltaire or the coarse ribaldry of a Paine. The only difference between the infidelity of the day and that of bygone times is that it adopts an underhand, sinister method of accomplishing what was performed openly and audaciously by its bolder predecessor.

The last attempt made in Germany, the home of rationalism, to cast dirt on the character of Christ and the honesty of His Apostles, with unblushing profanity, was associated with the publication of the "Fragments" already alluded to. The way had been paved for the abundance of mischief done by these demonstrations of reckless, daring, and sacrilegious scepticism. Semler had opened the flood-gates of rationalism by impugning and casting aside the canonical authority of the Holy Scriptures, by representing these venerable records as on a par with ancient writings which present some gems of valuable truth buried under heaps of error, and by elaborating the famous *accommodation theory*, by virtue of which we are to look upon Christ's teaching as to His second coming, the day of judgment, the resurrection, the existence of angels and devils, as mere accommodations to the prevailing errors of His age. And Dahrtdt had carried out the conclusions arrived at by him to their legitimate consequences, and made ideas and facts held sacred throughout Christendom topics of profane merriment and scurrilous attack. And so, when Lessing published, between the years 1774 and 1778, several fragments of Reimarus's work entitled, *Vindication of the Rational Worshipers of God*, deposited in the form of a manuscript in the Grand Library at Wolfenbittel, the Church in Germany had no reason to stand aghast, as if startled by a new and unprecedented display of rationalistic antipathy to her recognised standard of faith and practice.

The *Fragments* aimed at nothing less than the entire subversion of the Christian faith. They held up the evidences of Christianity as unworthy of a moment's serious thought, spoke of the creeds and confessions of Christendom in the most contemptuous manner conceivable, represented the narratives contained in the Old Testament as

tissues of myths and legends, characterised such incomprehensible doctrines as the Trinity as incompatible with reason, and therefore fit for nothing but universal disapprobation. But the Christology embodied in these publications is even more obnoxious than the vituperations cast on the facts recorded in the Jewish Scriptures, or the symbols upheld by the various sections of the Church Universal.

According to them, Christ was an ambitious demagogue, who wished to revive the moribund religion of the Jews, and become their king. He had not the slightest desire to become either a social reformer of radical tendencies or the founder of a new faith. His real object was to emancipate His fellow countrymen from the Roman yoke, and have Himself proclaimed as their sovereign, and He strove to compass this object by resuscitating the dying spirit of their ancient religion, and utilising such enthusiasm as might be evoked by fervid appeals to their national aspirations.

Expecting to reach the summit of His wishes, He marched in triumph to Jerusalem, but, though occasionally idolised by the mob, He did not succeed in securing the national support on which He had calculated, and, instead of mounting the throne of David, He had to give up His life amid unutterable agonies upon the cross. His disciples made Him after His death what in His lifetime He had never dreamt of becoming. They made Him the founder of a new religion, manufactured and ascribed to Him a series of stupendous miracles, fathered upon Him discourses concocted by themselves, put forward in His name claims of the most extravagant nature, and raised Him by means of abominable tricks and execrable lies to the lofty position He has occupied in the estimation of the world during the last eighteen hundred years.

In a word, the *Fragments* published by Lessing, generally known as the *Wolfenbüttel Fragments*, represented

Christ as an ambitious demagogue, whose schemes of self-aggrandisement terminated in an ignominious death, and His Apostles as clever cheats, who, determined to put a good face over a bad matter, fabricated the stories of His resurrection and ascension, along with others of a less stupendous character, and raised Him to a throne, more durable and more glorious by far than that which He had been ambitious of mounting

Why these gentlemen, who ascribe such miracles to the disciples, stand aghast before those attributed to the Master, it is impossible to say! The reaction occasioned by the *Wolfenbüttel Fragments* showed that, however degraded the German Church really was, she had not gone down so low as to be an unconcerned spectator of so rabid an attack on her Lord and Master and His chosen disciples

She had connived at the rise and growth of rationalism under the fostering care of Semler and his immediate followers—had treated the scurrility with which the most vicious of them had attacked the inner sanctuary of her fundamental doctrines with high-minded and contemptuous neglect. But here were publications which, though on the whole vulgar and even scurrilous, had a dash of logical accuracy and philosophic calmness about them, and it was justly believed that works of such a nature could not be allowed to pass unchallenged without weakening or endangering the cause she had at heart. And so replies were published, and criticisms attempted, in a manner remarkable enough to show that there was, after all, a good deal of vitality in a body which now for some time had been regarded as a dead corpse

The *Fragments* called forth a universal and concurrent expression of disapprobation from all parts of Germany, and their editor, Lessing, who had published them to feel the pulse of public opinion, rather than to head a new

attack on the faith once delivered to the fathers, stood confounded before the formidable opposition raised up. He had to change his tactics, and all who have subsequently walked in his footsteps have had to sail clear of the rock on which his reputation was well-nigh wrecked. Since the complete failure of his stratagem, the character of Christ and the veracity of the Apostles have been left apparently intact by infidel writers, or attacked by them insidiously and stealthily rather than openly and violently.

In Lessing the age of furious attacks, rabid invectives, and fulminating tirades against the truths of Christianity terminated, and with him the era of specious theories, well-cut periods, and smooth utterances, as bitter weapons employed against our holy religion, commenced. This great change accounts for the roundabout way which rationalists have been treading in their attempt to crush the prevalent belief of Christendom, and the alacrity with which they have resorted to anything and everything, but pious fraud, to get rid of the miraculous element connected with it !

The failure of a serious attempt like that contained in the publication of the *Wolfsbützel Fragments*, to blacken the character of Christ and impeach the veracity of the Apostles, resulted in the adoption of what has been called the natural explanation of the supernatural elements of Christianity. Sceptical endeavours to prove pious fraud having completely collapsed, recourse was had to that method of explanation which tends to reduce the stupendous miracles chronicled in the New Testament to natural events, and the still more stupendous life around which they cluster to an ordinary life.

But this valuable exegetical instrument was carefully and cautiously applied, at first to the Old Testament and finally to the New, and the success anticipated was for a time proportioned to the stateliness of diction under cover of which the new attack connected with it was made. Eich-

horn and others were the leaders of the onset against the miraculous facts recorded in the Old Testament Under their magic touch, such a miracle as the opening by the earth of her wide mouth to swallow up Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, dwindled either into an ordinary earthquake, or into a trick dexterously played by Moses, and the struggle which Jacob had with the Angel by whom he was blessed, became a dream somewhat like those with which somnambulists have in all ages and countries been familiar

But the work of destruction was sure to be left incomplete if it was confined to the miraculous narratives, the theophanies, the angelophanies, and other extraordinary events of the Old Testament After these had been successfully disposed of by the new scheme of natural explanation it was necessary to apply it, with equal success, to the miraculous stories presented in the New Testament

Herder was one of the first, if not the very first, person to recognise this necessity, and to meet it in the manner indicated He tried to reduce some of the miracles of Christ to ordinary events, and the explanation he offered of the great miracle connected with our Lord's baptism is a fair specimen of his method. The heavenly dove, which is said to have descended and sat on the head of our Lord, was simply a bright ray of light, and the voice heard was the low muttering sound of the thunder

But the exegetical work begun by Herder was completed by Dr Paulus, of Heidelberg, who in his *Commentary on the Gospels and Life of Christ*, both published within the first thirty years of the present century, applied the principle of natural explanation to all the miraculous stories of the New Testament, not to a few scattered here and there He is therefore represented as the author of a mode of explanation which had been employed, to a considerable extent, by those who had gone before him

The ingenuity of Paulus may be indicated in a few words.

Some of the miracles of Christ may be easily accounted for. Animal magnetism, psychological influence, and other expedients of the sort, are enough to explain the instantaneous cures which play so prominent a part in the life of our Lord. Christ and His disciples had a great deal of magnetic power in them, and they often healed diseased persons by communicating to them portions of this power by means of contact. They touched patients, and thereby magnetised them into instantaneous, complete, and striking cures. But unfortunately cures said to have been effected by animal magnetism are now thrown aside as fictitious rather than real, and science obstinately refuses to accept this novel remedy as a powerful ally of the healing art. It must, therefore, be cast overboard, and some other power called in to explain the miraculous cures recorded in the Gospels. And so psychical influence, or the magical power which a strong mind exercises over feeble ones, is adopted as an explanation.

A great and good man like Christ could not but exert an extraordinary influence over weak minded and diseased people, and the instantaneous cures which resulted from His commands are to be ascribed to the faith and confidence He inspired, rather than to the miraculous power generally attributed to Him. And this is the more probable, as many of the diseases instantaneously healed by Christ were imaginary, and consequently such as are generally dispelled by intensity of faith, rather than by therapeutic virtues of any medicine administered.

The various forms of demoniac possession which our Lord had to cure were mental ailments, rather than bodily diseases, and Christ's sweet words of love, so eminently calculated to charm us away from spiritual disquietude and perturbation into sweet peace and tranquil repose, were enough to dispel them. The miraculous cures, which form the largest portion by far of the body of miracles ascribed

to Christ, were, after all, ordinary events, susceptible of a satisfactory explanation—based on known principles of science. But the disciples, looking at them through the manifesting-glass of their superstitious veneration for Him, converted pigmies into giants, and represented common occurrences as if they were stupendous miracles !

Our rationalistic friends are intoxicated with the beautiful theories manufactured by their fertile brains, and they are not to be expected to face the formidable difficulties in their way, such as the fact that faith-cures are, as a rule, of a tentative character and often spurious, whereas the cures effected by Christ were real, complete, and permanent, and the truth that several of the diseases healed by our Lord are positively incurable, and never yield to the restorative efficacy of faith. It is convenient to group the several classes of cures effected by Christ into one mass, and to trace them all to a cause scarcely fitted to explain even a few, and rationalism is not foolish enough to pass from the region of convenience into that of inconvenience !

But when the miraculous cures ascribed to Christ are thus summarily disposed of, the work is not even half done. There are other and more stupendous wonders to be accounted for and explained away, but a champion of rationalism like Dr Paulus, after having performed so many feats of exegetical legerdemain, is not expected to succumb to them. The fecundity of his brains is equal to the occasion, and expedients and stratagems are suggested as fast as the difficulties to be overcome are presented.

Is the glory which shone around the wakeful shepherds when Christ was born to be accounted for? A dazzling meteor or the light of a lantern passing by is ready to explain the wonderful phenomenon. Is the miracle of the water changed into wine in Cana of Galilee the apparently insuperable difficulty in the way of rationalistic exegesis? It is easily removed by the contrivance of "a harmless

wedding joke" made by the disciples, who had procured and concealed the quantity of wine said to have been miraculously produced on the occasion

Is the transfiguration of Christ, together with His conversation with Moses and Elias, the snare spread in the path of our rationalistic friends? A misty morn, with the light of the sun suddenly breaking through the mists, and shining upon the two friends with whom Christ was engaged in interesting conversation, is ready to liberate them from its meshes. When men born blind are healed, a precious "eye-salve," prepared by Christ, but unknown to the druggists of the day, is imagined, and the obstacle overcome. And lastly, when the dead are raised by appropriate words of command, a fainting fit, or a death-like trance, or that gloriously indefinite condition called suspended animation, is resorted to in order to eliminate the supernatural element from the Gospel records.

The arbitrary character of this style of interpretation cannot be exposed better than by a somewhat detailed description of the ingenious way in which some of the most astounding of our Lord's miracles are explained away. The miracle of the fish caught by Peter and the tribute-money found in its mouth is susceptible of a perfectly natural explanation. It is in the first place absurd to suppose that Christ, whose wants were supplied by public munificence, could not procure this trifling amount in an ordinary way, and therefore the supposition that a miracle was needed to meet the pressing emergency is untenable. And therefore what Peter was directed to do was simply this—he was to catch a number of fish and sell them in the market, or catch a large fish, open its mouth to prevent it getting spoilt, and sell it for the amount needed to satisfy the demands of the tribute collector.

After this, the great miracle of the loaves and fishes cannot give this profound exegete any trouble whatever. The

people in the wilderness might be divided into two classes—those who were rich and well-to-do, and those who were poor and ill-to do. The former had provisions with them, enough and to spare, while the latter had none, or scarcely any. Christ made the people sit in companies, and then set a good example by sharing His own scanty provisions with some of those who had nothing to eat. The example exercised an electric influence on the well-to do portion of the community, and they brought out of their ample stores, not only what was needed by themselves, but what was sufficient to feed the whole assembly. So the parties were all fed, and the remaining stores were gathered into a basket !

The miracle of Christ walking on the sea is also susceptible of a similarly easy explanation. Christ was walking on the shore when, the wind being adverse, the disciples were sailing along the coast. They mistook Him for an apparition, and were frightened. Christ made Himself known to them, but their fear continuing unabated, He directed Peter, who was a good swimmer, to swim to the shore. Peter commenced the work well, but, being paralysed by fear, began to sink. Jesus put forth His hand, pulled Him out, and thus saved his life.

The resurrection of Christ is also disposed of in this summary manner. Christ did not yield up the ghost, but only fell into a swoon, and there was therefore nothing wonderful in His appearance after His supposed death. And His ascension was simply His retreat into that forest from which he emerged to appear to Paul, and convert his fell hostility by a pardonable stratagem into warm friendship and devotion. All this reads like caricature, and shows what miracles our rationalistic friends need to work in order to get rid of the well-attested miracles narrated in the Gospels.

There is not an event in the history of the world, not excepting the existence of Paulus himself, which cannot be

explained away by such expedients. Our wonder is that sensible people are sometimes silly enough to be misled by a species of interpretation so obviously absurd and so decidedly at war with reason, common sense, and every known principle of literary or philosophic criticism. How gullible men at times are !

Before attempting a brief reply to the theory connected with the name of Paulus, let us not pass over the claims of the hero, who not merely endorsed it, but even carried it a step further. Dr Schenkel resorted to all methods of criticism, that elaborated by Paulus as well as those connected with the names of Strauss and Baur, to get rid of the miraculous element in the New Testament, but it is as a champion of the natural, in contradistinction to the mythical and other explanations, that we now bring him forward.

His mode of criticism is even more arbitrary than that of his prototype, and his picture of the life of Christ is an embodiment of his peculiar habits or tendencies of thought. He makes the Gospel of Mark his favourite, because it does not saddle the life of Christ with the "Legend of the Infancy," but he explains the miracles narrated in this Gospel partly by a reference to the superstition which induced the author to tamper with Peter's faithful reports of the doings of our Lord, and partly by the assumption that Mark's original production was revised and interpolated in subsequent times.

The Gospel of John is represented by him as spurious, and utterly unworthy of credence as a narrative, but those portions of it which appear to be subservient to his purpose are accepted as genuine, and utilised with alacrity. All the historical documents of the New Testament are dealt with in this arbitrary manner; and a picture of Christ is held up, as far removed from the original as the caricatures of the Christian doctrine, presented in Brahmo pamphlets, are

from the different articles of the creed really believed in by us

Christ was emphatically "a man from the people," a workman Himself, and prepared, by His bitter experience, to be a redoubtable champion of the rights of the generally despised and downtrodden working classes. But His antipathy to the aristocracy of His native country was as nothing compared with that with which He opposed the extravagant pretensions advanced by its hierarchy. His experimental knowledge of the sufferings of the labouring classes made Him a demagogue, and the unchecked tendency of His education under the general sunshine of the Galilean sky was to make Him a sworn enemy to "the High Churchism" of His age and country.

He became a democrat in politics and a congregationalist in religion, and the two great objects of His life were the elevation of the lower orders to the platform of rank occupied by the nobility, and that of the laity to an absolute equality of position with the clergy. Or rather the one great object of His career was the obliteration of all social and ecclesiastical distinctions, and the complete union of the various orders of society into a compact, well-balanced, and homogeneous brotherhood.

And it was His anxiety to accomplish this great revolution that induced him to appropriate to Himself the title of the Messiah. He found certain ideas afloat, certain tendencies at work, and He could not help allowing His career of philanthropy to be shaped and fashioned by them. His "Messianic consciousness" was slowly, gradually, and almost in spite of Himself developed. He at first strove to carry out His reform in the capacity of a demagogue, or rather a valiant champion of Low Church principles, but when people persistently saw their Messianic conceptions and anticipations realised in Him, and when specially Peter of his own accord called Him the Messiah, or Christ of

God, He was obliged to alter His plan. He saw that He could not very well accomplish the large task He had assigned to Himself without humouring floating prejudices and availing Himself of current errors. He, however, took care to divest the prophecies embodied in the Old Testament, and the ideas afloat in consequence, of their grossness and secularity before applying them to Himself.

The prophecies had pictured a great conqueror marching forward, in the plenitude of his irresistible might, to extend his beneficent sway over the length and breadth of the whole world, and the people in consequence joyously anticipated their immediate liberation from the Roman yoke, and their exaltation as a nation to a position loftier and more glorious by far than that to which centuries of brilliant conquest had raised the people of Rome.

Christ, however, had to work out a spiritual reform—to compass the eradication of legal forms, the obliteration of ecclesiastical and political distinctions, and the propagation of truth fitted to rear the fabric of human society on the broad principles of universal fraternisation. He therefore could not but spiritualise recorded predictions and current aspirations before pointing Himself out as the Personage in whom they were fulfilled and realised.

Our rationalistic friends do not pause to explain why, when our Lord had in reality to oppose and neutralise current habits of thought, He most unnecessarily attached a slur to His character by accommodating Himself to them, under circumstances fitted to set forth a culpable elasticity of principle on his part. Nor do they stop to inquire why the people persisted in seeing their Messianic ideas and expectations realised in Him, when the avowed object of His life was to counteract and nullify them. These minor considerations are, we suppose, unworthy of a place in the lucubrations of the great champions of historical criticism!

But let us now come to the miracles of Christ. These are

grouped by Schenkel into two classes—miracles of healing, and works of absolute omnipotence¹ The miracles of healing may be easily explained by a simple reference to that psychological influence which a great intellect like that of Christ could not but exercise over minds of an ordinary stamp When in the wilderness, our Lord discovered in Himself a marvellous power—viz, that of calming troubled souls by His sweet words of comfort and assurance, and to this happy discovery must be traced all the varieties of miraculous cures which are said to have displayed His superhuman power, as well as His extraordinary benevolence

The palsied man let down in a bed through an opening in the roof of the house within which Christ was instructing a large assembly of attentive hearers, was healed by the electric influence emanating from the assuring words, "Thy sins are forgiven thee" The trifling circumstance that the palsied man was healed, not when these comforting words were uttered, but when he was commanded to take up his bed and walk, is of course unworthy of notice The woman afflicted with an issue of blood was healed by the pitch of religious excitement to which she was worked up by the public notice taken of her unostentatious act of faith by Christ. The fact that she was healed before such notice was taken of her faith should not be allowed to mar an explanation so natural and beautiful The centurion's servant was healed in consequence of his extraordinary spiritual excitement "and invincible faith in the healing power of Christ." The fact that the Scriptures, though loud in praise of the invincible faith of the Master, are silent as to that of the servant, is of course of no consequence whatever

Our rationalistic friends cannot be expected to do more than accept those portions of the narratives before them, and those portions only, which harmonise with their

preconceived notions and the beautiful theories they have to elaborate

But the works of Omnipotence have to be explained. With the pages of Paulus open before the critic, this can by no means be a very difficult task. Christ did not feed five thousand men in a miraculous manner, He merely nourished their souls by "consecrating" the provisions which they had with themselves, or had fetched from neighbouring villages, and distributing them through the disciples. Christ merely walked along the shore when the disciples were led by surrounding darkness to suppose that He walked on the sea. The daughter of Jairus was sleeping, as Christ Himself acknowledged, not dead, and a few comforting words raised her from the bed of sickness. The legendary story of Lazarus rising from the grave has obviously been evolved from the parable, which represents Lazarus as poor in this life, but unspeakably rich in that which is to come. The resurrection of Christ and His ascension are also disposed of in the handy manner indicated by Dr Paulus.

Thus are the miracles of our Lord, both great and small, travestied rather than explained by the great champions of rationalism, and the life around which they cluster, and of which they may justly be represented as natural features, caricatured rather than delineated in all the glory of its spotless and ineffable excellence! But nothing is gained by these exegetic stratagems, inasmuch as enigmas, instead of being explained, are multiplied, and difficulties, instead of being obviated, are only made the more appalling and insuperable.

Admit the miraculous element in the New Testament, and all is natural, reasonable, beautiful, and sublime! Deny the supernatural, and a combination of contradictions more grotesque and unaccountable than that presented in the sacred narratives is inconceivable.

Admit the miracles of Christ, the sublimity of His Life,

the glory of His character, the purity of faith He inspired, the probity of the disciples, their lofty enthusiasm, their wonderful success, the growth and prevalence of the Church, and the regeneration of the world consequent upon its triumph, are natural and explicable. Deny the miracles of Christ, and each of these circumstances becomes an inexplicable riddle, or rather the Lord of glory becomes a model of cunning rather than of virtue, the disciples become rogues, and the triumph of Christianity an inscrutable enigma.

The so-called natural explanation is therefore ludicrously unnatural! Explanations of the miraculous element in the New Testament so grotesque, wild, and unnatural as those put forward by Paulus and Schenkel, do not deserve a formal refutation. They indicate a wild play of the imagination and fancy, as well as what may be called a superlative degree of frivolity and unfairness, and they are so decidedly groundless, and so outrageously ludicrous in their nature, that serious and sensible people, except when blinded by prejudice, are not likely to be misguided by them. They are based upon a number of gratuitous assumptions. They take for granted that the Gospels present a kernel of facts concealed under a shell of opinions, and that they were tampered with, mutilated, or burdened with accretions some time after they had been composed.

Now, it is clear as noonday that both these presuppositions are groundless. The Gospels are a plain, simple, unvarnished, unadorned record of facts, and if in anything they are pre-eminently unique, it is in the scrupulous care with which they avoid all parade of opinion or speculation. The writers never allow themselves to be drawn into philosophic disquisition, controversial wrangling, or wild conjecture, and they scrupulously shun the impropriety of thrusting themselves forward, or of mixing up the

astounding facts they narrate with their own theories and opinions

Indeed a plain unvarnished statement of facts, such as we meet with in their writings, is scarcely to be found in any of the innumerable books which make up the colossal historical literature of the world. Place them side by side with the biographies of Christ composed both by the champions of rationalism and orthodoxy, and their peculiar excellencies, together with their reliability as historical records, will be plainly seen by contrast. And yet we are to believe that their writings present facts buried under heaps of opinions, and that the first thing we have to do, to give them a thoroughly historical character, is to separate the truth they contain from the mass of error by which it is concealed!

Again, we must believe, and that in the teeth of satisfactory evidence in favour of their genuineness and integrity, that they were revised and tampered with long after they had been composed—that is, in the middle of the second century, or upwards of a hundred years after the death of Christ. But why are we bound to set aside clear evidence and accept as fact what at best is an unsupported speculation? Because the books contain accounts of miracles, and miracles are impossible! Is this not begging the question with a vengeance?

Our rationalistic friends enter upon the examination of the Gospels with a foregone conclusion in their heads!—on the very threshold of these venerable records they loudly proclaim the impossibility of miracles. Has this impossibility been proved or is it susceptible of a satisfactory demonstration? These questions are not allowed to puzzle them. They simply assume that miracles are impossible, and woe be to the person who presumes to express opinions inconsistent with the assumption! With such a presupposition to guide us the task before us becomes easy

enough Separate the miraculous stories with which the Gospel narratives are encumbered, or manipulate them so that they may be changed into reports of ordinary facts, and the triumph of criticism is completed

But there are fresh difficulties in the way The supernatural element in these records is so thoroughly intertwined with the natural, that a separation, such as that which is suggested, is sure to result in a violent rent Let us repeat what we have so often said, that the miraculous element of Gospel history is an essential, indispensable feature, not merely an accidental appendage, and that therefore its extrication is simply an impossibility And consequently whenever attempts have been made, even by men of deep learning and splendid talents, to disentangle the supernatural from the life of Christ, these have resulted in ludicrous failures

And this may be said with equal propriety of all attempts to explain away the miracles of Christ or make them shrink into commonplace or ordinary events The examples already adduced show how the natural explanation has fared The failure of this species of interpretation is so complete that intelligent men in these days refer to it only as one of those whimsical modes of criticism which have been thrust into the limbo of forgetfulness, or relegated to the region of the dead

But these explanations are not only based on a string of gratuitous assumptions, but they are gross failures Their avowed object is to vindicate the character of our Lord, and the integrity of the Apostles, from the foul aspersions cast on them by the reckless and frivolous infidelity of former times But though their tone is good, and the language in which they are couched is admirable, they leave these objects of virulent attack exactly as they were when they entered the lists

The character, for instance, of our Lord scarcely appears

improved in the *Life* of Paulus or the *Sketch* of Schenkel Christ in these carefully and artistically drawn portraits is by no means the sublime model of virtue He is loudly declared to be. He forms indeed a proper estimate of the reigning vices of His age, and is, moreover, penetrated with a laudable desire to rectify them

But He is by no means over-scrupulous in the selection and employment of the means fitted to compass the end He has in view. He finds certain mistakes of a serious character afloat, but, instead of correcting them with the zeal of a reformer, He simply avails Himself of them with the cunning of an unscrupulous and crafty demagogue or astute diplomatist. He finds His disciples led by a superstitious veneration for Himself to mistake ordinary events for miracles but, instead of bringing them into the right path, He encourages their error, and even avails Himself of it to surround His person with the glamour fitted to make His plans successful. Though convinced that He is not the Messiah whose advent is looked for by His countrymen, He allows Himself, against His better judgment, to be honoured and even worshipped as such, and, though convinced of the absolute impossibility of miracles, He does not scruple to hold Himself up as a great miracle worker, and base His claims on the miracles foolishly attributed to Him by the people.

Do we not see here an elasticity of conscience, a flexibility of principle, a departure from rectitude, such as would brand an ordinary man, not to say the founder of a new faith, a religious teacher, or a reformer of morals, with eternal infamy?

How, again, do the poor disciples fare under the pressure of this style of criticism? Not only are they represented as ignorant and foolish men, children of superstition, and victims of fanaticism, but they appear under clouds such as leave blots of the foulest stamp on their moral character

True, their simplicity and honesty are made subjects of a glowing panegyric, but the compliments showered down upon them appear meaningless when we are told that they had recourse to mean tricks, such as those of distorting facts, misrepresenting truths, and changing ordinary incidents into striking wonders, with a view to make their Great Master what in reality He was not.

Beneath the drapery of rhetorical embellishments, under which the real purposes of our rationalistic friends are often concealed, we see the same caricatures of our Lord and His Apostles which were held up to public scorn in bygone ages, and which they pretend to regard with perfect horror!

Some of our educated countrymen plume themselves upon their ability to rationalise the miracles of Christ or to explain them on scientific principles. They are happily ignorant of the fact that the attempt has been made, but in vain, by some of the best scholars and profoundest thinkers of modern Europe. The natural explanation has failed to satisfy sensible men, and it has therefore been superseded by other theories, to which reference is to be made in the two following lectures. It leaves a miserable skeleton of facts, unfitted to account for the great triumphs which Christianity has achieved.

Separate the shell of accretions from the kernel of facts, and what is left? Jesus Christ, a son of Joseph and Mary, emerging out of the poverty and obscurity in which the first thirty years of His life are spent, to denounce current views and popularise some bright ideas evolved from the philosophy of the Greeks and the theology of the Jews, and terminating His career in an ignominious and shameful death.

An ordinary man, with a bright character soiled by contact with the errors of his age, and a devout disposition mixed with not a little of the questionable wisdom of this

world, striving to reform his countrymen, and ultimately falling a victim to their rage, such is the poor picture to which the present ascendancy of Christianity, together with the unspeakably great moral revolution it has accomplished, and the unprecedented impetus it has communicated to civilisation, together also with the omnipotent influences which are emanating from it, and causing dreary wildernesses to bloom as the rose, is to be ascribed ! People who can raise so huge a superstructure on so slender a basis need not stand confounded before the miracles of Christ !

XIV

THE MYTHICAL EXPLANATION

ONE of the persons who were the most formidable opponents of the so called natural explanation of Christian miracles, and whose united effort to bring it into contempt was ultimately crowned with complete success, was not an advocate of orthodoxy, but a champion of rationalism

David Frederic Strauss aimed at the species of frivolous criticism connected with the name of Paulus, one of those fatal blows from the effects of which it never recovered. He called the explanation furnished by Paulus pragmatic in contradistinction to that offered by the Church, and known as the dogmatic, and he succeeded, along with others of a very different persuasion, in setting forth its unreasonable, arbitrary, capricious, and grotesque character so completely, that few sensible persons in these days ever think of it, except as a theory which has had its day of triumph and been gathered to its fathers.

He also opposed, with some show of vehemence, the method of explaining the miracles of Christ resorted to by the coarse infidelity of former times, and revived in his own country in the writings of the wildest of the followers of Semler, as well as in the *Wolfenbüttel Fragments* published by Lessing. He was sure that the Gospel writers, whose probity and veracity are manifest on the surface of their

inimitable narratives, could not reasonably be stigmatised as a set of false witnesses, or impostors impudently palming off their own inventions as historical facts, and so cheating the world into virtue and piety of the sublimest type

Nor could he help believing that, if the Gospels were regarded as historical records, the miraculous element entering into their texture, and intermixed with their substance, could not, by any stretch of ingenuity or latitude of interpretation, be explained away. And so he was reduced to the necessity of either accepting the received explanation of the Church, called the dogmatic—the explanation which represents the miracles recorded as true and their Author as Divine—or racking his brains for a theory more durable than those which he was instrumental in exploding.

The first alternative he recoiled from in horror. A rationalist of the first water and an ardent admirer of Hume, he could not be expected to countenance the superstitious notions, current among the blind adherents of orthodoxy, regarding the possibility of miracles. And if he could not so much as bear the very idea of the possibility of the supernatural, he could not be instrumental in encouraging the outrageously mistaken idea that Divine interpositions, such as are presupposed in the miraculous stories connected with Christianity, had actually taken place.

He therefore had no alternative but to resort to a theory which had already been originated and set forth by De Wette and Grohmann, but which was developed, matured, and brought to perfection by his own genius. This was the famous Mythical Theory, destined to supersede the natural explanation of the school of Paulus and Schenkel, destined also to be superseded, after a brief season of prosperity, by the speculations of Baur, the greatest by far of the rationalists of modern times.

Strauss ought not to be held up, as he is sometimes done,

as the originator of this theory His relation to it is something like that of Sir Isaac Newton to the theory of gravitation The principle of gravitation had been discovered before Newton, but that great thinker first proved its universality and paramount importance, and found in it the explanation, not of one or two, but of all the shifting, changing phenomena of the material world

In a similar manner, the mythical theory had been elaborated to account for the grotesque mythology of the heathen world, had also been applied to some of the miracles of the Old and New Testaments, before the publication of Strauss's *Life of Christ* But it was reserved for the young Lecturer on Theology in the University of Tübingen to carry out this principle of explanation to its extreme though legitimate consequences, and to bring, not a few parts, but the whole of the New Testament under its plastic and transforming operation

Some of the miraculous stories of the Old Testament, and some of the prominent facts of the New, had been declared mythical by his predecessors, but he clearly saw that such superficial and half-hearted criticism would not do, and so he strove to prove that the whole of the Gospel history, from beginning to end, was nothing but a tissue of mythical inventions Christ, as He appears to us in the New Testament, is a beautiful mythus, and the miraculous stories clustering around and adorning His person are chaplets of myths, woven by the warm imagination and retrospective faith of His disciples, when the real facts of His life had been forgotten or looked at through the haze of intervening ages!

Strauss first published his *Life of Christ* in 1835, when he was an inexperienced young man under thirty, and no one was more surprised than he by the noise it made and the sensation it created Though written avowedly for men of learning, theologians, and philosophers, and

in a cold and passionless style, it became a favourite with almost all classes of people, and was read and admired, not only by the graduates of conspicuous Universities, but even by the higher pupils of obscure grammar schools, not only by men of scholarly reputation, but even by persons of average intelligence. Nay, even the working classes vied with one another in eulogising a work which seemed to inaugurate a new era—an era of unprecedented success—in the history of German scepticism

The newspapers and reviews were literally inundated with notices of this extraordinary production, and even provincial journalism temporarily cast aside its local and sectarian tendencies to make this bold attack on the citadel of the Gospel history the subject of appropriate articles and elaborate critiques

Nor was the excitement generated by Strauss's *Life of Christ* confined to the country, to the voluminous and profound literature of which it was regarded as a valuable contribution. The book was translated into all the principal languages of Europe, and it shook, as it were, all the great countries of that favoured continent to their centres. In Italy, in France, in England, and even in conservative Scotland, it exercised a baneful influence over the minds of the young and the unwary, and schools of infidelity of the type it is calculated to feed were conjured up, as if by the wand of a magician, as soon as its principles became popular

Nor did it remain confined within the broad circumference of Christendom, the work overleaped its boundary lines, penetrated into British India, and fed the unfledged infidelity of its educated young men in its metropolis. I have on my table a volume of extracts from Strauss's *Life of Christ*, published in Calcutta within twenty years after its appearance in Europe—that is, at a time when its wonderful but ephemeral influence in its native land had

been completely crippled by the able replies it had called forth

Our countrymen are always about a quarter of a century behind the times in their parade of infidel sentiments, and they scarcely hear of, and never certainly adopt, the theories broached in Europe against the truth of Christianity till they have become stale and hackneyed ! Hence the necessity of our reproducing old arguments to counteract theories which are dead everywhere but in India

Strauss's *Life of Christ* was consigned to oblivion after a short season of unprecedented prosperity Its publication was followed by a reaction in favour of orthodoxy, similar to what had counteracted and neutralised the disastrous influence of the *Wolfsenbüttel Fragments* The champions of the Christian faith were not slow to perceive that the tendency of this work was to eradicate completely those dogmatic elements of their religion which the author has avowedly left intact, but really undermined, and they came forward with rejoinders eminently fitted to bring the theory propounded in it into the contempt towards which the so-called natural explanation of Christian miracles had been brought by Strauss himself

During the ten years succeeding the publication of his book, almost innumerable Lives of Christ were written, with the avowed object of presenting a true picture of what is caricatured therein, and among the great authors who measured their strength with the champion of the mythical theory, we see the colossal figures of Steudel, Hengstenberg, Tholuck, Neander, and Ullmann Of these numerous replies, we in India are most familiar with that connected with the name of Neander, the great Church historian, and its tone and spirit may be regarded as a fair specimen of the candour, erudition, and ability which characterise them as a set of apologetic writings They succeeded in exploding the new-fangled theory so completely that it was,

by general consent, consigned to oblivion, and the hero of the hour was hurled back from the giddy pinnacle of fame to the obscurity from which its singularity and speciousness, rather than its reasonableness and profundity, had raised him

In this condition, however, he was not content to live; and so, in 1864, he made a fresh attempt to revive the celebrity he had once enjoyed. He published a popular edition of his ponderous work, and strove, by an appeal to the people, to neutralise the opposition of those theologians by whom the weak points of his plausible theory had been mercilessly exposed

The attempt proved abortive, the book, though composed for the people, being even more unreadable than its predecessor, and the spirit of the times being hostile to his speculations. The bitterness with which he attacks his opponents, together with the coarse, vituperative language to which he stoops when speaking of the clergy, whom he unscrupulously represents as a set of hypocrites determined to fight under the banner of a known error, for the sake of the pecuniary advantages attached to their position, shows the morbid fretfulness with which he had borne the obscurity to which he had been consigned, and from which he vainly expected his new publication to raise him

It is desirable to indicate the philosophical point of view from which he contemplated the miraculous narratives contained in the New Testament, before making some preliminary observations to show the contents of this remarkable book. Strauss was a redoubtable champion of the Hegelian philosophy, and in carrying out its principles to their legitimate conclusions he out-Hegelled Hegel

He did not believe in the existence of a personal God, in moral distinctions, or in a future state of rewards and punishments. His pantheism was thorough-paced, and he

believed in the perfect identity of the world with God, and the laws of nature with the Divine will. A violation of a law of nature appeared to him as tantamount to a violation of a law of the Divine essence, besides being a gross reflection on the Divine wisdom. God cannot contradict Himself, cannot suspend or violate the laws of His Being, and therefore a miracle, which necessarily involves a suspension or violation of one or more of the immutable laws of the Divine essence, is an impossibility.

There may be mysteries in the life of Christ impenetrable enough to puzzle his intellect or baffle his ingenuity, but he is thoroughly convinced what our Lord was not and what our Lord did not do—viz, “anything superhuman or supernatural.” He laughed at the dogmatic presuppositions of the poor advocates of orthodoxy, but he rested the entire superstructure of his ingenious theory on an assumption which is as groundless as those he assails and ridicules are reasonable and well-founded.

But his philosophy not only convinced him of the utter impossibility of miracles, but made him pre-eminently idealistic or dreamy in his speculations. As regards historical research, he occupies a standpoint the very antipodes of that occupied by Neander and other sober historians of his own and other countries. In his opinion an idea is more important than a fact, and an issue raised more real than a living person. History is to him a tissue of ideas developed into facts, and issues giving importance to persons. The ideal in history takes precedence of the factual or real, and interest centres in the contest of principles arrayed against one another, rather than in the living characters around which these important struggles cluster. Strauss, therefore, instead of collating facts and ascertaining their true significance, dreams of a number of ideas, and compels facts to represent or pay homage to them. No wonder he converts facts into myths, and myths into facts,

as often as the exigencies of his theory demand such metamorphoses

With these principles in his head, Strauss commences his investigation of the contents of the New Testament, and of course it is to him a matter of no consequence whether the Christ portrayed therein is an historical character or a mythical hero. The grand ideas to which His life gives prominence, and the important issues involved in the history of the religion which emanated from Him, are proper subjects of historical research, rather than the facts connected with His person and career. Such being the case, he has no hesitation whatever in sweeping away what is called by his own countrymen the historical Christ. He fixes his attention on what he represents as the fictitious character depicted in the Gospels, evolves from it his pantheistic views of "the dogmatic elements" of Christianity, and reduces the facts of the Trinity, the incarnation, the sacrifice, and atonement to beautiful but unsubstantial ideas.

Strauss's *Leben Jesu*—the edition referred to—consists of two parts, which, as they bring into bold relief all the defects of the style of writing in vogue among his countrymen, it is no easy task to read.

In the First Part he briefly reviews some select biographies, specially those published in the interval between the publication of the first and that of the second edition of his work—not excepting Rénan's—tries to overturn the evidence generally advanced in favour of the genuineness and credibility of the Gospel history, coolly affirms that it was composed in the second century by men who could not possibly have been eye-witnesses of the events narrated, or ear-witnesses of the discourses reported, sets forth the irrepressible antagonism between modern philosophy and the orthodox idea of a miracle, propounds and elucidates his own theory, accounts for the development of Christian

ideas, and presents what he calls the kernel of facts around which the supposed mythology of the Gospels naturally and spontaneously clustered

The Second Part shows how the various groups of myths, gathering around and adorning the outline of the life of Christ presented in the First, were formed. A careful and detailed analysis of the work, and the arguments therein contained, cannot possibly be attempted within the limits to which we must confine ourselves, and is, moreover, not needed by the exigencies of the argument presented in these lectures. We shall therefore briefly state his theory, present the kernel of facts the author assumes, show by a couple of examples how the mythical stories gathering around it were, in his opinion, formed, and bring forward a few of the arguments by which the arbitrary and sophistical character of the mode of explanation connected with his name has been exposed.

The mythical theory of Strauss may be stated and explained in a few words. The miraculous stories connected with the life of Christ are, generally speaking, not authentic narratives of historical facts, nor fables intentionally fabricated by designing men, but myths unconsciously invented by the religious consciousness of the Church of the second century. The origin of Christianity is adorned, like that of every other positive religion, with a garb of mythical stories, which grew spontaneously out of current ideas and prevalent aspirations.

When "the historical Christ" made His appearance certain Messianic expectations, based upon current interpretations of Old Testament types and prophecies, were afloat, and after He had been proclaimed and accepted as the Messiah looked for, these expectations gradually developed into those significant myths with which we find His life embellished. There were some kinds of types disentangled by the popular imagination from the almost innumerable

prophecies of the Old Testament, and to these the varied features of this life were made to correspond. Hence the wonderful metamorphosis which the Christ of history had to undergo before the fictitious portraiture of the Christ of the Gospels was completed.

He was really born in Nazareth, but the current type formed upon what Strauss calls the antetype of David, and based upon the well-known prophecy in Micah, led to the formation of the myth which transfers His birthplace from his own native town to the royal city of Bethlehem. The Messiah was to be a prophet like unto Moses or after the Mosaic type, and Christ could not but have signalled His career by miracles, such as had, according to the common belief, been wrought by His antetype about fifteen hundred years before His advent, and so varieties of miraculous stories were unconsciously invented and grafted upon His life.

Elias and Elisha were regarded as Messianic types, and as they had the reputation of having been miracle-workers, the Gospel writers were unconsciously led to bring Christ upon the stage as a worker of miracles in no way inferior to either of them. Again, the well-known prophecy of Isaiah led them to represent Him as the Messiah, who had healed the eyes of the blind, unstopped the ears of the deaf, and caused the lame to leap as the hart, and finally the picture of Daniel in the den of lions led them to fabricate, unconsciously, of course, the story of the resurrection and the miraculous incidents which form its striking features.

These writers were, therefore, not deceivers in the proper sense of the term. They did not consciously fabricate miraculous stories, and palm them off as narratives of historical facts, nor did they mistake ordinary events for miracles, and publish their misconceptions or exaggerated opinions as worthy of credence. They were animated by that spirit of undiscerning retrospective faith, which had elaborated the

mythology of the heathen world, and which led them naturally to connect with the personage whom they accepted as the promised Messiah the varied types and symbols into which their Messianic expectations had been sublimated. They believed that Jesus was the Messiah looked for, and they could not but bring themselves, by a process natural and explicable, to the conclusion that He lived and acted as depicted in their current interpretations of Old Testament prophecies. They cannot, therefore, be represented as deceivers in the ordinary sense of the term—that is, they did not consciously deceive except in some instances.

Strauss has been led by Baur, as he himself confesses, to admit in his second edition the existence of conscious fiction in the New Testament more than he did in the first. Christ's conversation, for instance, with the woman of Samaria appears to him so "methodically framed," and so decidedly an offshoot of what in the phraseology of the eminent critic who has opened his eyes may be called a latent tendency, that it cannot but be ascribed to conscious invention. But even here the belief that Christ must have looked upon the Samaritans with feelings diametrically opposed to those with which they were regarded by his countrymen, may to some extent be advanced in defence of the integrity of the narrative.

All this may be predicated even more appropriately of the story of Lazarus rising from the grave. The incidents of this story are so artificially arranged that it cannot possibly be accepted as a myth unconsciously invented, but yet the belief that Christ was the Resurrection and the Life might have led to its unconscious fabrication, and may therefore be brought forward in defence of the honesty of the writers. The conclusion to which we are brought by this critic is that, though some of the miraculous stories related in the Gospels partake of the nature of conscious fabrication, they are generally speaking to be accepted as myths uninten-

tionally invented by persons who, under the influence of a warm faith and a vivid imagination, worked up current ideas into historical facts

The nucleus of fact in the gorgeous picture of Christ presented in the Gospels, assumed by the author of the book under review, may also be set forth in a few words Jesus Christ was a son of Joseph and Mary, born in the natural way in the obscure town of Nazareth He lived in obscurity during the first thirty years of His life, but not in vain He carefully enriched and improved Himself by means of such knowledge as He found within His reach, and so laid the foundation of the great work He subsequently accomplished

During this period of His life He also helped His father in his work, and so, like other young Jews of the time, learned a trade as well as placed Himself under the benign influences of a liberal education His mind was formed by the stern and sombre theology of His own country and the bright and luminous literature and philosophy of Greece, or by influences emanating from the schools of the Rabbis and the magnificent centres of Greek culture

His place of residence during the first thirty years of His life, a town in Galilee of the Gentiles, offered Him peculiar facilities in this respect, inasmuch as in such a place He could not but come in contact with both the systems of training by which the cause of human advancement was helped forward in His age

His peculiar education made Him dissatisfied with the religious condition of His own countrymen, and the formal and lifeless worship connected with it, and so when He heard of the reform inaugurated by John the Baptist He became his follower—a fact ignored by the Church for “dogmatic reasons!”

But even as a follower of the Baptist He showed that the æsthetic portion of His nature had not been cultivated

in vain, as, while John employed nothing but vehement declamations as instruments of reform, He saw the necessity of overcoming opposition and gaining adherence by an overpowering exhibition, not of indignation or might, but of love. When John was put in prison Christ made up His mind to push forward the good work begun by him, and so He appeared in the capacity of a Prophet. And ultimately, when He carefully examined the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament, as currently interpreted, He could not but conclude that they were fulfilled in Him, and consequently He did not hesitate to have Himself proclaimed as the expected Messiah.

He never, of course, worked miracles, but the glowing imagination of the people around Him could not but represent Him as a miracle-worker, and so when He entered into a place multitudes of sick people flocked around Him, and either touched Him themselves or compelled Him to touch them. Many of them, especially those whose disease, like that of demoniacs of all ages and countries, was imaginary rather than real, were healed in consequence of their excited imagination. Some of the so-called miraculous cures may be admitted, but the greater miracles, the more striking cures, and those called by Schenkel "Works of Omnipotence," must be consigned to the region of myths.

Emboldened by partial success, He marched in triumph into Jerusalem, entered the Temple as one invested with prophetic power and authority, cleansed it in a violent manner, and excited alarm by vehemently denouncing the sins of the ruling body. No wonder that He was arrested, tried, found guilty of having run down existing institutions, and sentenced to death. His crucifixion was the natural outcome, so to speak, of the course He had pursued, and He had to some extent foreseen it, though the plain prophecies of this event ascribed to Him are unconscious mythical inventions.

His premature and violent death seemed to inflict a fatal blow on the ardent expectations of His disciples. But they managed with wonderful versatility to accommodate their belief to the untoward event. Meditating on the chapters of the Old Testament in which the sufferings of God's people are portrayed, such as Psalm 136 and Isaiah 53, they conceived the idea of a suffering Messiah, and looked upon His crucifixion as the crowning act of a life of martyrdom. Nor did they stop here. Their vividness of imagination and intensity of faith placed before them the glorious vision of a Messiah bursting the bands of death and rising triumphant from the grave in which His mangled body had been buried.

And when their dying expectations revived, and their zeal was rekindled, these ignorant men really became heroes, and their singular enthusiasm electrified the audiences they preached to, and the new faith spread far and wide until in the second century the Gospels were compiled, and the mythical portrait of Christ, upon which the world has been gazing, enraptured and wonderstruck, for eighteen hundred years, was completed! What a series of miracles have these poor unsophisticated Galilean peasants, of whom Strauss cannot condescend to speak in favourable terms, wrought! What a revolution, social, intellectual, and moral, has been effected by these weak-minded victims of superstition!

Now we shall show by a couple of examples, selected almost at random from Strauss's *Life of Christ*, how the various groups of myths, with which the historical sketch presented is embellished, sprung out of the warm imagination of the early Church. Our first example is the transfiguration of Christ, and our second is His resurrection. The transfiguration is evidently a story founded on the story of the glory which made the face of Moses to shine as he came down from the mountain, on the top of which he had seen God "face to face."

The Jews did not believe that Christ was the prophet like unto Moses, whose appearance had been foretold, because His countenance had not been made radiant with the glory which, spread over the face of their great Lawgiver, had surprised and frightened their forefathers. The necessity of the invention of a legend such as might represent Christ as resembling Moses in this respect, became a little too palpably manifest to be overlooked or neglected. The necessity brought into such bold relief, the retrospective faith and the inventive genius of the Church were put upon the stretch to fabricate a legend fitted to meet it.

The two events, the investiture of Moses's face with glory and the transfiguration of Jesus's countenance, have so many points of resemblance that we cannot but look upon the latter occurrence as a reproduction of the earlier one. The change in Moses's face was wrought on the height of Sinai, and that of Jesus's countenance was wrought also on the top of a mountain not named. The event in the case of Moses occurred after the mountain had been under a cloud for six days, that in the case of our Lord happened six days after a preceding occurrence. Moses had with him, besides the elders, three men, Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and Christ had with Him the favoured triumvirate of His Apostles, Peter, James and John, and lastly, when Moses comes down from the mountain the first thing he sees is the provoking spectacle of the people in mad rebellion against God, in consequence of the incapacity and faithlessness of their leaders. So when Christ comes down He sees the boy possessed with a devil, and is displeased with the disciples for their inability to cure him. These and some other points of resemblance, which may be enumerated, show that one of these stories is but an imitation or *fac-simile* of the other.

The dogmatic reasons for the characters introduced, Moses and Elias, are obvious. The Jews accused Jesus of

trying to overturn the legal dispensation, and nothing could reveal the absurdity of this accusation so thoroughly as a friendly conversation between our Lord and the founder of that dispensation. Again, the non-appearance of Elias was regarded as antagonistic to Jesus's claim to be accepted and honoured as the Messiah. "Why do people say that Elias must first come?" This question was put by the doubting disciples, and though Jesus partially satisfied them by assuring them that John was the Elias referred to in prophecy, the problem remained on the whole unsolved. To remove all difficulties arising from it, the story of an interview between Christ and the champion of the theocracy identified with John was, unconsciously of course, manufactured.

But there was another actor somewhat behind the scene, and He could not be supposed to be entirely silent, and so likely to be thrust aside, as an unconcerned spectator.

The bright cloud indicated, as it invariably does in Scripture phraseology, the presence of God, and what can more appropriately show His interest in the matter than the words attributed to Him, "This is My beloved Son, hear ye Him"? In this simple way was the transfiguration myth elaborated by the warm imagination of the Church of the second century.

In a similar manner was the Resurrection myth invented.

The vision of their risen Lord having once flitted across the minds of the Apostles and some of the disciples, a number of miraculous incidents could not but be invented to adorn the event. And what could better embellish a myth of this description than the introduction of angels? These are therefore ushered in to assist in bringing about the fact of the Resurrection, to guard the sepulchre after it had occurred, and to give suitable tidings to the women who had "the first visions." And the disciples, who were led by fear to flee precipitately to Galilee, are of course

reported as having gone there in consequence of angelic directions, and such as were given by their risen Lord Himself

In short, the whole story is such as could not but have sprung out of the excited imagination of men, whom a series of fitting visions had led to believe in so unique a phenomenon as the corporeal resurrection of a human being crucified and entombed. And the story of the ascension is apparently the New Testament edition of the story of Enoch's disappearance and Elijah's triumphant march to heaven in a chariot of fire drawn by horses of fire. In this easy and natural way were the various groups of myths, clustering around the birth, childhood, public life, passion, and death of Christ, invented.

The mythical theory of Strauss, like the speculations of Paulus and Schenkel, has only to be stated in order to be refuted. The arbitrary character of the string of assumptions on which it is based, or from which it derives its vigour and vitality, cannot but take the sober reader by surprise. His first assumption, that of the impossibility of miracles, has already been taken notice of. In the bold and emphatic manner with which he postulates the impossibility of the supernatural, he displays an arbitrary spirit, which has been condemned, in deed if not in word, by some of his own disciples.

Rénan, his French disciple, occupies a position less decided, it may be, but a trifle more tenable or defensible than his. He does not, like his German master, peremptorily deny the possibility of miracles, but he affirms, somewhat more modestly, that a miracle has not yet been proved to the satisfaction of reasonable men.

Strauss's cool assumption as to the impossibility of the supernatural is the first brick which ought to be pulled out of the crazy foundation on which his ingenious theory is based. He moreover coolly assumes that the Gospels were

composed long after they are said to have been written—that is, during the first fifty years of the second century. This assumption puts him in antagonism to the results of modern criticism. The champions of the critical school to which he himself belongs have been compelled, by the proofs arrayed before them, to place the composition of the first three Gospels at least about half a century earlier than the date assumed by him. And even Rénan is obliged to look upon the synoptical Gospels as contemporary records of the principal events narrated in them.

Strauss ignores the proofs brought forward by these critics in support of the conclusion he sets aside, ignores the vast body of direct evidence marshalled by Christian writers in behalf of the genuineness and authenticity of these books, and coolly places their composition where they may easily meet the exigencies of his theory.

Again, he takes for granted that the writers of these books were men in whom the imagination predominated, men fitted by their training under a body of plastic traditions to invent myths rather than record facts—to write novels, in short, rather than compose reliable narratives. Their own writings, however, tell a very different story regarding them. These show them to be sober, practical historians, whose attention was fixed upon facts rather than upon ideas, and who were determined never to sacrifice an iota of truth on the shrine, so to speak, of rhetorical beauty.

Strauss finds it convenient to ignore the indisputable marks of historic reliability impressed upon the Gospels, and hold up their authors as poets rather than historians, fabricators of tales rather than narrators of facts, and he, lastly, takes for granted that the people among whom these myths were invented and circulated were ready to swallow any number of fictitious tales which might be concocted regarding the Founder of Christianity. They were, in other words, so decidedly under the influence of the spirit of

mythicisim that they could not but mistake poetry for history, or accept fictions as facts

They lived in an eminently historical age, not a mythical period, and they were familiar with some of those canons of criticism which have in our day communicated a mighty impetus to the science of history, but yet we must, in obedience to the dictates of the theory under consideration, look upon them as a set of ignorant people, so decidedly under the control of a warm and excited imagination that myths, of whatever character, had only to be invented to secure their credence and homage

This point ought to be emphasised. Myths and legends grow up spontaneously in a mythical or legendary age, never in an historical period, during the infancy of a nation, never when it has reached its maturity. The age in which the events narrated in the Gospels are said to have occurred was pre eminently an historical age. The marks of a mythical period, pointed out by Mr Grote—viz, the prevalence of poetry, the absence of prose composition, contempt of facts, idolatry of ideas, fondness for dreamy speculation and childish credulity, do not characterise the age of the Apostles and their successors

It was an age when poetry had lost its preponderance and prose composition had worked its way into prominence, when some of the best historians of the ancient world, Josephus, Suetonius, Tacitus, etc., lived and flourished, when philosophy was descending from its aerial heights to benefit mankind at large, and when the credulity of superstition was giving place to varied forms of scepticism. Its characteristics were, therefore, opposed to the dreamy spirit or ideal tendency, to which the composition of the supposed myths found in the Gospels must be ascribed

But under the guidance of Strauss we must ignore these practical tendencies, suppose the predominance of the mythical spirit, and thus account for the miraculous stories

associated with the life of Christ Here you see a string of assumptions, any one of which it is not attempted to prove Strauss does not even attempt to prove the impossibility of miracles, the historic unreliability or the mythical character of the Gospels, and the marvellous credulity of the people by whom they were believed and accepted as sober and thoroughly dependable historical records He simply enters upon the examination of the records before him with these presuppositions or foregone conclusions in his head Is it a wonder that he makes havoc of these venerable records, arbitrarily rejects portions which do not serve his purpose, and cheerfully accepts such as are in harmony with his pre-conceived notions ?

But such reckless, wild procedure does not go unpunished even in a critic of infidel propensities, and so Strauss involves himself in a series of inconsistencies and contradictions more glaring than any noticeable in the productions of men of parts such as he would look down upon as thoroughly contemptible He ostentatiously treats the abilities of the Gospel writers with supreme contempt, but yet their biographies present a consistent, symmetrical, and beautiful picture, while his *Life of Christ* is a mass of wild, incoherent, and contradictory speculations !

Not merely is the arbitrary and sophistical character of the theory in question—not merely is the capriciousness with which it is elaborated and applied to the records of which it makes complete havoc, but the impossibility it involves is an argument against it The interval between the death of Christ and the composition of the Gospels is not long enough to explain the origin and rise of a huge body of myths

The prophecies regarding the destruction of Jerusalem and the Final Judgment are certainly saddled with difficulties which the commentator cannot easily explain away. As they stand, they seem to connect the end of the world with

the destruction of the Metropolis of the Jewish Kingdom, to represent the latter event as ushering in the final consummation of things, and this circumstance has been pointed out and laughed at by infidel writers.

Little do these gentlemen imagine that the features in these prophetic utterances they point out as errors of the grossest type are strong arguments in favour of the received opinion regarding the antiquity of the book in which they are contained. Had not Matthew's Gospel been composed prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, these apparent blemishes would not have been found therein, their existence, therefore, is a proof of the accuracy of the opinion which places its composition before the terrible event.

The Gospels of Mark and Luke present so many points of resemblance to that of Matthew that their composition ought also to be placed before the destruction of Jerusalem. One of the Gospels, that of Luke, makes a distinct allusion to some historical records which had been current in the Church before its composition, and the idea of an original Gospel or *Prot-evangelium*, after the model of which these narratives had been composed, is not inadmissible. We are therefore authorised in assuming that the miraculous stories found in the received biographies of Christ were current in the Church in the days of the immediate followers of Christ. And we must come to the strange conclusion that varieties of myths were somehow unconsciously manufactured by the eye-witnesses of the principal occurrences of the life of Christ, and greedily devoured by His contemporaries!

If, however, the necessity of our adopting so ludicrously absurd a conclusion is denied, we have only a period of thirty years for the elaboration and propagation of a body of mythology, which according to all known laws of development ought to have taken at least two or three hundred years to spring into existence.

The Homeric myths were concocted about two hundred years after the famous siege of Troy, and they were invented in an age when writing was unknown, and the rhapsodist performed the functions of the historian. The characteristics of the Homeric age are those pointed out by Grote as fitted to distinguish a mythical from an historical period—viz., an utter absence of prose composition, philosophical disquisition and critical spirit, and the presence of a childish credulity and an inordinate love of the marvellous—characteristics already pointed out under another head.

And yet in so dark an age a period of two centuries was needed to popularise a body of myths by no means more stupendous than the so-called fictions grouped around the life of Christ, though decidedly more grotesque and wild.

If so, how can we account for the growth, within thirty years after the crucifixion of our Lord, of the many miraculous stories clustering around His person? Is not the interval too short to make the application of Strauss's theory to these stories justifiable? Even granting, for argument's sake, that the Gospels were composed when they are said by Strauss to have been written, that is, during the first five decades of the second century, a period sufficiently long for the growth and development of a huge body of mythology, such as that presented according to the theory under consideration in these venerable records is still a desideratum.

Within a hundred years after the death of Christ, a few myths of an ordinary character might have been elaborated, not certainly a vast body of mythology entering into the texture of His life so thoroughly that an attempt of the most ingenious kind—such as Strauss's *Leben Jesu*—to separate the wheat from the chaff results in a ludicrous failure. The mythical theory therefore involves an impossibility, as well as displays its inherent weakness by presenting glimpses of the utter groundlessness of the string of assumptions on which it is based.

The chaste character of the miracles of Christ is a strong argument against the mythical theory of Strauss. If the miraculous stories, contained in the New Testament had been myths unconsciously invented by the excited imagination of superstitious men and women, they would have resembled the mythology of the world in their wildness and incongruity, their fantastic, grotesque, and obviously mythical character. They would have been types of extravagance, extravagant in their character, extravagant in their details, and extravagant in their results. They would have moved our risibility rather than excited our admiration, would have spontaneously generated in us a feeling of distrust and horror, rather than the assurance and pleasurable emotions with which we naturally regard them.

The miracles of Christ cannot possibly be myths, because they have scarcely anything in common with the mythology of the world, because their chastity, congruity, and reasonableness reveal historic reality, rather than mythical extravagance. The style, moreover, in which they are narrated has nothing in common with the inflated, turgid diction characteristic of mythical tales, it being simple, chaste, and unadorned.

We need not multiply arguments against the Mythical Theory, its bare statement, as we have said, being enough for its refutation. Let us, however, affirm that the theory in question is a huge failure. It fails to account for the intensity of faith and the warmth of the imagination to which it attributes the miracles of Christ. If Christ did not work miracles, did nothing extraordinary, nothing to merit the ascription of the Messianic honours to Him, why did the disciples accept Him as the promised Messiah? The current Messianic expectations were not realised in Him, the idea present in the popular mind did not correspond to the reality embodied in His life, but yet they not only believed in Him, but made Him the object of

such intensity of faith and fervour of affection as led them insensibly to form the large body of mythology of which He is the subject in the New Testament. Is not this a miracle even more unaccountable than any recorded in the Gospels?

But let us advance from the negative to the positive side of the enigma. The expectations, based on current interpretations of the Messianic prophecies scattered through the Old Testament, were not merely not realised, but really confounded in Jesus of Nazareth. They expected, according to a well-known prophetic declaration, that Christ would be born in Bethlehem, but He was believed to have been born in Nazareth. They expected, according to their view of the spirit of ancient prophecy, a conquering hero and a reigning sovereign, but Jesus was a poor reformer, and an itinerant preacher of righteousness. They expected that Christ's earthly career would terminate in a series of unexampled victories, but Jesus closed His life upon the cross amid ignominy and reproach.

In the Man of Nazareth, therefore, their Messianic expectations, their national hopes, their most glowing anticipations literally perished, and yet He was the person the disciples singled out as the One in whom all the prophecies, from which they had derived their Messianic ideal, were fulfilled to the very letter. Were they mad? Suppose their want of discrimination or credulity was miraculous, the question, How did they manage to communicate their faith to thousands of their own countrymen, and myriads of the heathen around them remains a puzzle of puzzles, a mystery of the mysteries! Suppose, again, they had the power of magnetising the people with whom they came in contact, of spreading their own marvellous enthusiasm around them, the question, How did their zeal continue unabated, in spite of the terrible persecutions to which they were exposed? remains a mystery!

What a series of miracles must be presupposed in order to get rid of the Gospel miracles ! We must believe, that though Christ literally baffled the fondest expectations of His disciples, these persons, though sane, not to say of a sound judgment, believed that these were actually fulfilled in Him ! We must believe that when they exhibited their unreasonable, whimsical faith in the midst of their countrymen, who had been cherishing the hopes which had cheered their own bosoms, multitudes of them rushed towards it at the cost of all that was dear to them ! We must believe that the more furiously persecution raged against them, the more tenaciously they adhered to their groundless faith, and that when they, almost to a man, sealed it with their life-blood, their successors not only perpetuated it, but caused it to fructify into a beautiful cycle of mythical inventions ! Are not our opponents straining at gnats and swallowing camels ?

The mythical theory miserably fails to account for the faith of the Apostles in the resurrection of Christ, and the great change wrought in them after the event, and in consequence of it. The explanation of this, the most stupendous of the miracles in the history of Christ, offered by Strauss, reads like a burlesque. Some features of this explanation have already been brought out, but it is worthy of reproduction.

The apostolic faith in the Messiahship of Christ was nearly extinguished when He was crucified, but their seasonable and lingering meditations on the main features of His life revived it. Then there appeared "a psychological necessity" for explaining His ignominious death, and so they believed, contrary to fact, that the idea of a suffering Saviour had been revealed in the Holy Scriptures, specially in those chapters in which the sufferings of good people in this life are graphically described. With such a portrait before them, they had no difficulty in reconciling

themselves to the death of their Master, however ignominious it was in popular estimation

But had His death entirely cut them off from the sweet influence of His presence and counsels? Was there no friendly intercourse between them and the Master of whose help they stood in need at every step of their difficult career? The thought that all such communication had perished with Him, never to be revived, could not be endured, and so there was a psychological necessity for the invention of the myth of its continuance. Under the circumstance, the disciples could not but see visions of the risen Saviour flitting across their minds, and the idea of a corporeal resurrection once conceived, the angelophanies and the posthumous appearances of Christ Himself, together with other embellishments, including the beautiful fiction of the ascension, flowed out of their heated imagination as naturally as "daughter plants" forming a "pillar'd shade" issue out of the huge banyan-tree

Explanations such as these show the nature of the artifices and stratagems resorted to by men who refuse to look at the natural causes of events, or account for facts in a rational manner, and they, moreover, tell the oft-told tale that our opponents invent many an unnatural miracle to get rid of the natural miracles recorded in the Gospel. Strauss's style of reasoning may be made use of to invalidate any historical fact, or change any historical character into a myth. Whately very successfully employs this species of logic to prove that Napoleon the Great was a fictitious character, and a German writer utilises it with equal success to prove that Martin Luther was a myth.

This theory fails most egregiously to vindicate the character of Christ, and the veracity of the Gospel writers, from the foul aspersions cast upon them by the infidels of bygone times. Strauss certainly speaks of the beautiful spirit of Christ, nursed on the lap, so to speak, of His

Hellenic culture, and makes Him the subject of a number of stereotyped compliments, but the character this hero of the mythical school depicts in his celebrated book shows that these encomiums are, after all, meaningless platitudes

Christ, as set forth in Strauss's *Leben Jesu* is not merely not an incarnation of God, not merely not a teacher sent from heaven, furnished with an extraordinary message, and endowed with extraordinary powers, not merely not a perfect model of virtue, but a very bad man, a compound of cunning and credulity, a deceiver and a dupe combined His assumption of the Messianic title was a mistake, but the encouragement He gave to His disciples and others when they mistook cures traceable to psychological influence for stupendous miracles was an act of deception

From the charge of practising deception, or resorting to questionable means to bring about glorious ends, He cannot, according to this theory, be set free He never corrected the mistake into which the disciples fell, when they imagined, according to floating traditions, that the Messiah must work miracles Far from rectifying, He availed Himself with alacrity of this error in furthering His own plans Such conduct in an ordinary man would be reprehensible, but in a man of His admitted piety thoroughly execrable

Again, Strauss cannot think of the claims He advances without accusing Him of extravagance and undue self-exaltation With reference to one, at least, of the extraordinary pretensions our Lord advanced, there cannot be the slightest doubt—viz, His second coming In exciting this expectation about Himself He was, according to Strauss, a wild visionary or a bragging deceiver Strauss does not go the length of admitting the latter alternative, but he unhesitatingly represents our Lord as a visionary But the soundness of judgment and serenity of temper He invariably displayed obliges us to have recourse to the less favourable alternative to account for what He said with

reference to His second coming, and the part He is to play on the great day of judgment. And consequently, Christ appears, in the book under review, a deceiver, one of the worst men, or rather the worst man that ever lived

Nor do the Gospel writers fare better in this gloomy picture-gallery than the great Master. They are certainly said to have been victimised by excited imagination and glowing faith, but it is maintained that they did invent some miraculous stories, and palm them off as reliable narrations of indisputable facts. And if they knowingly fabricated myths to develop and illustrate their favourite tendencies of thought, how can they possibly be represented as a set of simple, guileless, and honest people, led by a vivid imagination and uncontrollable feelings to mistake their day-dreams for hard, incontestable facts?

Again, if they were cunning men, and deceived the world in a few solitary instances, what guarantee is there for assuming that they did not do so in others? They who are cunning enough to deceive are not the men to be blinded by a warm imagination and agitated feelings, so as to be placed where they are sure to mistake the creations of their imagination for reliable facts. The fact assumed by Strauss, that the disciples deceived in some instances by means of natural, life-like stories, such as we cannot help mistaking for reliable historical facts, proves that they were wholesale deceivers, and that their records present nothing but a series of myths, coolly and deliberately invented to bring mankind over to their side. Strauss, therefore, brings us to the very same conclusion to which the rabid infidelity of a bygone age was brought by Voltaire and his profligate associates.

The tendency of Strauss's theory is found more thoroughly developed in Rénan's *Vie de Jésus*, or *Life of Christ*, than in his own book. Rénan boldly treads the path marked out by Strauss, and draws the principles enunciated

in the German author's work out to their legitimate consequences. He casts the mythical theory aside as unreasonable and absurd, and substitutes in its room the legendary theory, with which his name must for ever be associated. The miraculous stories embedded in the Gospels are not myths or day-dreams mistaken for and represented as facts, but legendary transformations of events which actually occurred.

The writers who were the immediate disciples of Christ—not men who flourished in the early part of the second century—were compelled, by the exigencies of the cause they had at heart, to exaggerate and transform ordinary events into miracles, and our Lord was obliged by the self-same circumstances to consent to their doing so.

Christ's public career, like that of Mohammed, shows a gradual but indisputable deterioration. At first, when, under the inspiration of the blue skies and the beautiful scenery of Galilee, He attained "a consciousness of God" purer than any ever realised by man, and developed in the sermon on the mount a thoroughly spiritual religion, a religion without forms or ceremonies, displaying its efficacy in the human heart, and transforming society through the medium of the radical change wrought therein. But He very soon found that, under existing circumstances, the good work He had to do could not possibly be done without the help of some pious frauds, and, in opposition to the suggestions of His better nature, He was obliged to encourage His disciples in their attempts to spread His reputation by changing natural events into supernatural occurrences.

We must—says the brilliant lawyer of Paris—take men as they are, and when we find that permanent good cannot be done them without the help of questionable means, both prudence and benevolence dictate the adoption of such means. When this axiom flashed on our Lord's mind, He

set aside the characteristic purity of the opening period of His glorious career, and had recourse to some questionable means, such as that of taking advantage of current errors, of utilising "the love" generated in the hearts of beautiful women, but destined never to be gratified, and of even encouraging His disciples to represent ordinary occurrences as miracles ! The cures said to have been effected by Him should be traced to psychological causes, while the acts of omnipotence ascribed to Him are legendary transformations of ordinary events, or, in plain English, offshoots of conscious fraud !

The resurrection, for instance, of Lazarus from the grave was evidently an illusion practised by His disciples in concert with Him. Disappointed by the cold reception He had met with, He listened to the suggestions of His disciples, and endeavoured to enlist popular superstition on His side by a great miracle. And so the farce of the raising of Lazarus, who had been laid in the grave alive, was enacted by Him with the help of His disciples and Mary and Martha.

Do not Christ and His disciples appear as consummate cheats in this charming little book ? Then as to the part which women play in the brilliant, but by no means spotless picture it presents, we cannot dilate upon it without being guilty of gross blasphemy ! This book, so frivolous and licentious in its character, so full of the gilded impurity and profligacy characteristic of the refined society of Paris, is a legitimate offspring of *Leben Jesu*, and carries the principles underlying the mythical theory to their inevitable results.

Strauss's theory, therefore, leads the world through a circuitous way back to those days when Christ and His disciples were impudently held up as impostors and knaves, and consequently, the righteous indignation he and his brethren direct against the coarse infidelity of bygone times ought to be heaped upon his own head.

The plausible explanations of the life of Christ attempted by these leading spirits of modern rationalism also show that if we abandon the Divinity of our Lord, the genuineness of His miracles, we are not merely entangled and lost in a labyrinth of enigmas and riddles, but literally forced to represent Him as an incarnation of impiety and wickedness rather than a model of godliness and virtue. Deny the Divinity of Christ and the miracles said to have been wrought by Him, and you are not merely entangled in a maze from which there is no way out, but compelled by a logical necessity to bring Him down from the pinnacle of moral glory into the lowest depths of moral degradation

XV.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

I HAVE, so far as my argument is concerned, reached my goal, and I may now with propriety bring this series of lectures to a close. I have set forth the nature and possibility of miracles, and attempted to obviate the most prominent of the old and exploded objections, which have been advanced in new and attractive forms, against the supernatural by the great champions of the infidelity of the day. I have set forth the paramount importance of the position which miracles occupy in the gigantic mass of evidence, which can be brought forward in support of the truth, or the Divine origin of Christianity.

I have attempted to prove the genuineness, authenticity, and integrity of the documents in which the miracles of our Lord are narrated and embodied, and also to indicate the unmistakable marks of genuineness or historical credibility impressed upon these stupendous exhibitions of superhuman or Divine power. I have presented the testimony, original and corroborative, which may be advanced in favour of these miracles, and dwelt upon the collateral evidence in their support furnished by the early propagation and present ascendancy of Christianity.

I have, moreover, shown how these reported miracles are intimately and indissolubly connected with the glorious

character of our Lord, and derive their strongest support from the extraordinary life He led, and the Divine Spirit reflected and mirrored in that life. I have also tried to set forth the inadequacy and fanciful and grotesque character of the theories which have been elaborated by modern rationalists to explain away the miracles of Christ, or to bring them down from the sublime height of the supernatural to the low platform of ordinary events.

In a word, I have demonstrated the fact, that our Lord wrought a number of stupendous miracles in attestation of the doctrines He taught with reference to His own person and the great work He came to accomplish, and I have nothing more to do than exhort you to accept Him as a Teacher sent by God, nay, as God Incarnate, the Mediator of a covenant more glorious than that of works, the Author and Finisher of your faith, and the Captain of your salvation!

My work is done—I have proved the truth of Christianity by setting forth the historical credibility of the miraculous story associated with it, and all that is left for me to do is to set forth the blessed results which are sure to flow from your cordial acceptance of it—as well as to warn you of the awful consequences of your rejection of it—and to retire from the chair I have unworthily occupied since the beginning of this course of lectures!

The Resurrection of Christ is one, though the greatest, of the miracles, the genuineness and historical credibility of which I have succeeded, I believe, in setting forth, and it is by no means necessary for me to make it the subject of a separate discourse. But certain reasons have induced me to make the Resurrection of Christ the theme of a separate lecture, though my doing so may at first sight be represented as a work of supererogation, or rather as a work superfluous and unnecessary.

It is not necessary for me in this place to state and enlarge

upon all these reasons, inasmuch as the most important and prominent of them will appear, one after another, as we go on. Suffice it to remark here that we make the Resurrection of Christ the subject of a separate defence simply because our wakeful and vigilant opponents have made this most stupendous of the miracles of our Lord the subject of a separate attack.

The champions of rationalism have not contented themselves with dwelling upon the uniformity of the laws of nature, and upon the consequent impossibility of miracles—they have not contented themselves with propounding theories to explain away the signs and wonders attributed to Christ. They have singled out of the mass of miracles ascribed to our Lord His bodily resurrection for their most determined and best organised opposition.

They have not merely concocted and promulgated theories to explain away the miracles of our Lord in a body, but they have given birth to special theories for the purpose of doing away with that in which these stupendous events culminated. Their avowed object seems to have been to capture the citadel of miracles, and when this object was accomplished they might have retired from the field, crowned with laurels of victory and radiant with joy. But they did not do so, for, we believe, they had a secret conviction in their minds that their work had not been performed, and that it was not time for them to raise shouts of triumph.

The obstacle in their way was the most stupendous of the miracles of our Lord, His corporeal resurrection, an event attested by testimony which even they could not but represent as unexceptionable. And if this huge and appalling obstacle remained unremoved, they were sure to lose the ground they thought they had gained, and their ultimate discomfiture was a matter of certainty. And so they had recourse to special stratagems for the purpose of surmounting this formidable barrier, and the theories they manufactured

to accomplish their object ought, in consequence of the speciality attached to them, to be made the theme of a separate discourse

In giving prominence to this miracle of miracles we are not merely acting in accordance with our most cherished convictions, but following the example our opponents have set. They having made it the subject of a distinct and special attack, we can have no alternative but to make it the subject of a distinct and special defence

These gentlemen affect to look upon the bodily resurrection of Christ as an event of very little moral significance. It is enough in their opinion to be assured that the Spirit of Christ animates His Church, and that the life of Christ exercises—permanently and ceaselessly—a holy, beneficent influence over her destinies. The Spirit of Christ lives, His sublime and glorious example lives, His teaching lives. His spotless life is before us, and by the plastic and moulding influences which emanate from this ever-abiding centre the regeneration of the world is being accomplished. Where is the necessity of our having recourse to an awkward theory like that of the bodily resurrection of our Lord, when we can so easily and so naturally explain all the good He is doing by resorting to His sublime example and glorious teaching?

The Brahmos have learnt to speak not merely of the miracles of Christ, but of His twofold nature, in this loose, inaccurate, but attractive manner. They assure us that by setting forth the Humanity of Christ we can stimulate the native goodness which glistens beneath outer coatings of depravity in the human breast, whereas we can accomplish nothing worth mentioning by giving prominence to our approved and received doctrine of His Divinity. Nay, we merely limit and circumscribe the moral influence of the life of our Lord by insisting on an element which places it beyond the confines of human sympathy and of human

imitation The Divinity of Christ, therefore, may be permanently shelved !

This sort of talk, however, is wild and meaningless, and it indicates, not merely an utter want of appreciation of the relative importance of Christian doctrines, but a disposition on the part of those who indulge in it to compel facts to retire before speculations which savour of nothing but morbid sentimentalism The question is not, Whether the Divinity of Christ is or is not calculated to do the highest amount of good to the largest number of human beings ? The question is, Whether the Divinity of Christ is or is not a fact ? And if it is a fact, our bounden duty is to accept and proclaim it from the housetops, even if we fail, as we certainly do not, to form a notion somewhat adequate of its influence on our life and conversation

In the same manner the question is not, Whether the bodily resurrection of Christ is or is not intimately and inseparably associated with the great work of moral regeneration, which Christianity accomplishes ? The question is, Whether the resurrection of Christ is a fact well attested and therefore undeniable ? And if it is we ought to accept and proclaim it, even if we fail, as we certainly do not, to see its paramount influence in the growth and development of the Church, and the consequent moral regeneration of the world

The Brahmos fail to see that, though Christ might have been a good Teacher and a spotless example of virtue without being Divine, His Divinity being set aside He could not possibly have been, what He claimed to be, the Saviour of mankind The rationalists fail to see that Christ could not possibly have been the Author of the moral regeneration of the world, if His Divinity had not been attested by His bodily resurrection

The estimate formed by Schenkel and others of the corporeity of the Resurrection of our Lord is very different

indeed from that presented in the New Testament, not to speak of the entire Bible. The Resurrection of Christ, that is His bodily Resurrection—for there is no such thing as the resurrection, literally speaking, of the spirit—enjoys in the Sacred Volume a prominence of position and plenitude of importance accorded to no other event recorded therein. Paul represents it as the foundation or the vital element of our faith when he says, “And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins.” The Resurrection of Christ occupies a conspicuous position in a cycle of glorious truths—forms an important link in a chain of facts, from which no link can be snatched away without destroying the whole.

The immaculate birth of Christ, His Spotless Obedience, His Vicarious Death, His Burial with the Rich, His Resurrection, His Ascension, the Pentecostal outpouring of His Spirit, and His Perpetual Intercession in Heaven—such is the glorious cycle of facts which cluster around the great work of Human Redemption. Take away one of them, and the entire edifice falls to the ground.

If the Resurrection, in particular, be disproved, Christ becomes either a deceiver or a dupe, and Christianity loses its vital principle or living soul. The Apostle Paul represents this event as an indispensable and indisputable proof of Christ’s Sonship, and therefore of His Divinity. He affirms that our Lord “was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of Holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” The Resurrection of Christ was a public attestation of the validity of the extraordinary claims our Lord advanced in the most authoritative and unequivocal manner.

Christ claimed to be the Son of God in a sense in which no being, human or angelic, can be the Son of God, not only on various occasions before vast assemblies of people, but in the solemn hour when the High Priest in the presence

of the Sanhedrim laid what might emphatically be called the oath of God upon Him, and urged Him to declare whether He was what He had so often, and in such unequivocal language, claimed to be. He fearlessly pointed out His future Resurrection as the event destined or ordained in the counsels of heaven to prove the validity of His claim with reference to the unique relation in which He stood to God.

Had the Resurrection not taken place the Divinity of Christ could not have been proved—nay, the humanity even of Christ would have been tarnished, His foresight proved defective, and His prophetic utterance regarding the event in question proved utterly false. And if Christ had been, by the demonstrated falsehood of one of the most pregnant of His prophetic utterances, proved a fallible man, egregiously mistaken with reference to His ultimate triumph over death and the grave, what would have become of the great work of human redemption!

The Resurrection of Christ was also an infallible proof of the completion of His great work, of God's acceptance of His sacrificial Death, and His own triumph over the worst of the sensible consequences of sin. It was by a magnificent victory over the death of the body that He proved His power to annihilate the death of the soul.

The penalty attached to transgression of the Adamic Covenant, or God's Covenant with our first parents in Eden, was death, temporal as well as spiritual, permanent separation of the soul from God, its life, and the decay and putrefaction of the body. Christ had come to annihilate in the case of His people, or believers, this dire twofold consequence of sin, and His Resurrection was a guarantee that His vicarious offering had been accepted by God, and that the great work He had come to accomplish had been finished.

Let it not be forgotten that the glorification of the human

body—its complete emancipation from the effects of sin, and its consequent exaltation—is nearly as important an element in the scheme of Christian redemption as the glorification of the soul, or its deliverance from the consequences of the fall. The Resurrection of Christ's body is a pledge or earnest of the future glorification of our bodies, as well as that of our souls, and consequently of our complete deliverance from the weakening and demoralising effects of sin !

The Resurrection of Christ is, moreover, the *terminus* of His humiliation and the starting-point of His glorification. In it His earthly life with its vicarious sufferings terminated, and from it His heavenly life with its joy and triumph, both of a benevolent stamp, dates. The Apostles never speak of the Resurrection of Christ as isolated from the Life of Glory of which it is the first step. On the contrary, whenever they speak of this glorious event, they speak of it as inclusive of that career of triumph of which it is the glorious starting-point.

We are at first sight surprised to find that, while the Apostles speak triumphantly and exultingly of the Resurrection of Christ, they speak of His subsequent Ascension, an event equally glorious, with comparative indifference and coldness—in plainer words, it cannot but be a source of surprise to us at first sight, that, while the Apostles make so much of the Resurrection of Christ, they make so little of the Ascension, which is a miracle as great and stupendous.

The explanation, however, is to be found in the fact that whenever the Apostles speak of Christ's Resurrection from the dead, far from representing it as an isolated event, they connect it in their minds with the glorious events that followed—viz, His Ascension, His session at the right hand of God, the outpouring of His Holy Spirit, and His perpetual intercession for His people. They invariably speak of the Resurrection of Christ in connection with, not as disso-

ciated from, the Life of Glory of which it is the prelude, and consequently they invariably speak of it in the most glowing terms of triumph and exultation.

The Apostle Paul maintains that Christ was powerfully declared by it not merely the Son of God but the Judge of the quick and the dead. He says, "Because He hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom He hath ordained, whereof He hath given assurance unto all men in that He hath raised Him from the dead."

The Resurrection, therefore, was in Paul's opinion an infallible proof not merely of the validity of our Lord's claims, not merely of the completion of the work He came to perform, but of His official career as Judge of the quick and the dead, which is to terminate when the wheat will have been brought into the garner and the chaff will have been burnt with fire unquenchable.

The Apostle Peter connects this event with His exaltation and the effusion of the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost. He also represents it as a proof of His Divinity when he says, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made the same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

The apostolic estimate of the event in which the humiliation of Christ terminated, and from which His glorification dated, is very different indeed from that presented in the writings of the rationalistic opponents of Christianity. Nor even do these gentlemen really believe what they avowedly maintain with reference to this great miracle. The energy and enthusiasm with which they attack it tend to prove that they do not in reality consider it so unimportant as they loudly and ostentatiously represent it to be!

The testimony in favour of this event, the corporeal Resurrection of Christ, is as complete as human testimony in favour of any past event can possibly be. It can be

traced through a receding and therefore narrowing stream back to the time when the great event in question is said to have occurred, and it is, moreover, of a nature calculated to meet the demands of the fastidious criticism of the age

The testimony of eye-witnesses is needed, according to Strauss, to establish the validity of so stupendous a fact, and the testimony of eye-witnesses may, even according to the theory of this rationalistic thinker, be brought forward in support of it

Strauss is obliged to admit that, though the historical books of the New Testament and its Epistolary literature were composed in the second century, the Revelation was written in the age in which the great events of Christ's life are said to have occurred. The testimony embodied in this book is even in his opinion contemporary testimony, or rather testimony borne by an eye-witness of unimpeachable probity. This testimony, Strauss firmly asserts, upholds the spiritual rather than the corporeal theory of the Resurrection of our Lord

But this assertion of the great opponent of miracles is thoroughly groundless, and it indicates that the great champions of criticism lose their critical acumen whenever they come across statements at war with their foregone conclusions. In the Revelation Christ is called "the first begotten of the dead," and passages referring to His Resurrection both directly and obliquely are scattered here and there throughout the book

The testimony under consideration is not merely suited to the squeamish taste of Strauss and his school, but it is fitted to satisfy the Baurean school of criticism. According to Baur only four of the twenty-seven books embodied in the New Testament can justly be represented as having been written and promulgated in apostolic times—viz, the Epistle of Paul to the Romans, the two Epistles to the

Corinthians, and the Epistle to the Galatians. It is not necessary to prove that these books most distinctly and explicitly speak of the Resurrection of Christ as a fundamental fact of Christianity, and the corner-stone of the Church. So that barring even the books of the New Testament rejected, most arbitrarily and unjustifiably, by the champions of this school of criticism, the testimony in favour of the great fact in question appears complete and unexceptionable.

Add to this the testimony contained in the books so rejected, the vein of testimony running through the writings of apostolic and subsequent times, and the man must needs be thoroughly impervious to sound reasoning, who ventures to call in question the genuineness and historical credibility of the miracle of miracles, which may justly be regarded as the foundation of that work of regeneration, which has confessedly emanated from Christianity !

But the champions of the so-called higher criticism have, in imitation of their predecessors, endeavoured to invalidate the testimony in favour of this, the central fact of this world's history. They have dwelt complacently, and with an air of triumph, on the apparent discrepancies and contradictions by which the documents in which it is related are in their opinion marred. But had they studied, with the candour in which they seem most deficient, the literature connected with the subject, their complacency would have given place to sheer despondency. The difficulty, based on the apparent contradictions noticeable in the Gospels, with reference exclusively to this subject, had been obviated by West in his admirable little treatise on the Resurrection, and if they had read that book with unprejudiced minds they would not have revived the objections triumphantly refuted therein.

If the narratives given in the Gospels, the Acts, and in one of the Epistles were looked upon as narratives of one

single appearance, or a very few appearances, the discrepancies by which they are at first sight disfigured would be insuperable obstacles in the way of their being received as authentic. But regard them as narratives of varied appearances, and place them, one after another, in proper succession, and you succeed in evolving from them a congruous and consistent history of the great event prominently brought forward

No less than ten different appearances of Christ after His death and burial are recorded in the New Testament, and if a disposition to carp and cavil were given up, and an attempt honestly and judiciously made to reconcile the documents in which they are chronicled, all difficulty would vanish into thin air, and our faith in the event be refreshed and confirmed

Let these documents be tested with the help of the light thrown on them by the following chronologically accurate and consistent narrative of Christ's appearances after His Resurrection, evolved not from our historical consciousness, but from the detailed accounts embodied therein

The Lord Jesus Christ first appeared on the Easter morning to Mary Magdalene when, having returned to the tomb the second time along with Peter and John, she stood before it weeping after these favoured Apostles had left. Then He appeared to the women who had come with Mary Magdalene to the sepulchre to embalm the body of our Lord, and who, after having seen a vision of angels and heard strange tidings, were returning in a state of natural but intense excitement

On that very day He appeared also to Peter evidently to assure the impulsive, zealous, but at times irresolute and weak Apostle, of the profound love he had wounded, but not exhausted, by his threefold denial of his Master. Later, in the evening of the same day, He appeared to the two disciples who were going to Emmaus, and whose

doubts and apprehensions were—in a slow, natural manner, not by what may be called the glamour of an extraordinary appearance—converted into a firm faith in His resurrection. Later, He appeared on that evening to the disciples without Thomas, and was at first regarded by them as a spectre sent to add to their fear and confusion, rather than their risen Lord present in their midst to cheer and console them.

A week after this last appearance our Lord appeared to the disciples with Thomas, and condescendingly submitted to the examination proposed by the sceptical Apostle, till, his doubts being removed, he involuntarily exclaimed, "My Lord, my God!"

These appearances took place in Jerusalem, but they did not exhaust the sensible proof of the resurrection, inasmuch as they were merely harbingers of appearances in some respects more formal and grander.

The first appearance in Galilee was by the Lake Tiberias, when, in the presence of seven of the disciples, Peter was solemnly restored to the Apostolate from which he had miserably fallen. This was followed by the great appearance to all the disciples, and probably to the five hundred persons referred to by the Apostle Paul, on the mountain to which they had been previously commanded to repair. An appearance was vouchsafed to James after this, with a view, evidently, to furnish him with the instructions needed to enable him to occupy worthily the prominent position in reserve for him in the Church of God. And the tenth, or last recorded appearance, on Mount Olives, terminated in our Lord's glorious ascension, as the disciples fixed then upward gaze on Him till a bright cloud concealed Him out of their sight.

Put the accounts presenting these ten appearances of our Lord one after another in succession, and all discrepancy vanishes into thin air, and they present a clear, consistent, and harmonious narrative, whereas, shuffle them at random,

and place them in an indiscriminate heap, and the result cannot but be confusion and chaos. The so-called discrepancies on which our adversaries plume themselves furnish an argument for, not against, the position we occupy with reference to the historic credibility of the resurrection of our Lord. They show an absence of all intention on the part of the narrators to deceive, inasmuch as if they had deliberately and intentionally practised a fraud, they would have doubtless taken care to make the slightest appearance of a contradiction an impossibility, or if they had failed to attain such a high degree of perfection in the art, they would certainly have succeeded in freeing their narratives from apparent contradictions so glaring as those by which their writings are said to be disfigured.

But not only have our rationalistic friends endeavoured to bring the testimony in favour of the event in question into disrepute by carping at the apparent contradictions in the narratives in which it is embodied, but they have made capital of the resurrection body of Christ, and set forth its nature as an indubitable proof of its unreality or legendary character. Is there not a glaring inconsistency in the representations given of the body of our Lord after His resurrection embodied in these narratives? The body is both corporeal and spiritual, both of the earth, earthy, and of heaven, heavenly. In some portions of the narratives it is represented as a corporeal body, it can be seen, touched, and felt, it can eat bread and broiled fish, and it bears marks fitted to prove its identity with the body which had been nailed to the cross.

In other portions, however, of the self-same narratives the resurrection body is represented as thoroughly spiritual. It is not subject to the laws of the natural body, is not circumscribed by the limitations which at times cause our free and evulsive spirits to groan. It passes from place to

place as a spirit, it makes itself visible and invisible, and it penetrates through closed doors and massive walls

How inconsistent these accounts ! Does not this incongruity tend to demonstrate that the resurrection of Christ is a myth ? When, however, our opponents speak in this strain, they forget that the unassuming nature of the body the narrators set forth as the one in which our Lord appeared after His resurrection is an incontestible proof of their veracity

If they had been fabricators of tales, or legend-mongers, rather than sober historians, they would not have made the appearances of Christ after His resurrection so tame and commonplace as they have made them. They would have made Christ appear in a body as glorious, at least, as that which some of them are reported to have seen, and been dazzled by, on the Mount of Transfiguration, and they would, very likely, have brought processions of angelic intelligences to add to the solemnity and picturesqueness of each of His glorious appearances. The vividness of the narratives is a proof of what may be called their contemporary character, while the vein of naturalness which flows through them is a proof of their complete trustworthiness or reliability

The body of Christ after His resurrection appears in a transition state, and its spiritualisation or glorification was not completed till after the ascension, and all the difficulties connected with it may be explained by a simple reference to the process of preparation through which it was passing during the period between His glorious triumph over death and His ultimate return to and reception in heaven !

Having cleared our way, we have nothing more to do than state and refute the theories which criticism has elaborated to explain away the great event, which may justly be regarded as the grand foundation of the Christian Church. We should have said *revived* and *paraded*, rather than *elaborated*

for it is an indisputable matter of fact that the champions of rationalism have brought forth nothing new in their attempts to invalidate the evidence in favour of or to explain away the Resurrection of Christ. The theories they have arrayed against it are by no means the offspring of their own brains, inasmuch as they had existed and been pressed into service by infidel writers before they were born.

One has only to study the apologetic literature of the ages gone by to be thoroughly satisfied that these gentlemen have revived and reproduced, in novel and attractive forms, objections that had been again and again triumphantly refuted before their day and generation. The vision theory, for instance, the most ingeniously constructed if not the best argued theory of the day, is clearly stated and triumphantly undermined and exploded by West in his admirable little treatise on the subject of the Resurrection of our Lord.

Let it also be observed that there is nothing so commonplace, nothing so absurd, nothing so apparently mean in the whole range of infidel literature, that our rationalistic friends have not been tempted to reproduce it in some shape or other, with an air of triumph. They have, for instance, reproduced the old and threadbare lie—for it scarcely deserves the name of a theory—to which the murderers of Christ resorted when they found their infernal design of destroying Christianity in the crucifixion of its Author frustrated by His Resurrection.

The disciples stealthily removed the body of Christ when the company of Roman soldiers appointed to guard the sepulchre were fast asleep! The soldiers were confessedly fast asleep, and yet they were thoroughly aware of what was going on in, or in the vicinity of, the tomb in which the body of our Lord had been buried! While in the arms of sound sleep, insensible and dead to all intents and purposes, they saw the disciples coming in a large company, rolling

away the huge stone from the mouth of the sepulchre, slowly and carefully undressing the recumbent body of our Lord, and carrying it away in triumph to some appointed place of concealment! Such is the ridiculously self-contradictory story to which, in their utter helplessness, the chief priests resorted to prevent "the last state" from being "worse than the first."

The absolute impossibility of the poor disciples, in their forlorn and melancholy condition, employing any trick of the sort, or any trick likely to generate a general belief in a corporeal resurrection of their crucified Master, is so apparent that nothing short of perfect infatuation or insanity can account for a revival of so ridiculously absurd a story. And yet respectable writers have arisen to trace the phenomenon of the Resurrection, and the regeneration of the world flowing from it, to a trick of the disciples.

Rénan, who oscillates between the imposture attributed to them in bygone ages, and notably in the *Wolfenbüttel Fragments* and the mythical and legendary theory of Strauss, affirms that the followers of our Lord were "heroically resolved" to have a Resurrection to raise their own drooping spirits, as well as to obviate a premature destruction of the work of their Master! And when they were thus nobly determined, what was there to hinder the fabrication and propagation of a resurrection myth?

Another example will tend to show that our rationalistic friends have only revived and reproduced the antiquated objections which had been again and again refuted before their day. Schenkel, for instance, re-states the exploded objection based on Christ's non appearance to the Jewish public generally after His Resurrection. Why did Christ confine the benefit of His appearance after that event to select circles of friends? Why did He not appear to the Jews generally, and preach as He had done before His crucifixion? Why did He not appear in the streets and

markets of Jerusalem, and move from city to city, and village to village, triumphantly demonstrating the futility of the attempt made by His great adversaries to destroy his religion in His crucifixion?

Why—we may simply content ourselves with replying that the Jews, who had with wicked hands crucified Him, did not deserve such a favour. And if such a favour had been bestowed on them they would most likely have grossly abused it. If Christ had appeared publicly to them, they would probably have once more attempted to apprehend, crucify, and bury Him. It was necessary that Christ should appear to His disciples to raise their drooping spirits, to establish their wavering faith, and to convert them into brave propagators of His religion, but it was by no means necessary that our Lord should, by an uncalled-for public appearance, give His adversaries an opportunity of attempting to repeat the tragedy by which they had filled to the brim the cup of their daring iniquity.

But Christ might have appeared to them after His Resurrection, and miraculously disarmed their animosity and frustrated their machinations, and then His appearance would have been an irresistible proof of His Divinity! But a proof which compels belief or makes unbelief impossible God never condescends to give, the object of evidence being to generate, naturally and reasonably, belief in hearts freed from prejudices, rather than to produce it by violent methods in souls impervious to sound reasoning.

A truce to speculation!

Let us before stating the theories which have been most skilfully handled if not manufactured by rationalists, make an observation or two on the cursory, off-hand, and evasive manner in which Baur tries to obviate the difficulty based on the alleged Resurrection of Christ. We have left this, the greatest champion of rationalism—this Goliath of modern criticism—out in the cold, because his theory, known as

the tendency theory, has more to do with the development of the Church than with the historical certainty of the miracles of Christ

He shows, or rather endeavours but miserably fails to show, how the growth or development of Christian ideas—those ideas which have according to his own admission been the basis of the work of reform accomplished by Christianity—may be naturally explained by a reference to the literature of ancient nations, and the doctrinal disputes in the early Church, and how the propagation of these ideas may be pragmatically explained by the historical forces at work when they were matured. But he does not formally attempt to account, naturally and pragmatically, for the stupendous miracles ascribed to our Lord. He says very little indeed on the subject of miracles and he resorts to legends and dogmatic manipulations when he does attempt to explain them.

A separate notice, therefore, of his off-hand remarks on miracles is not indeed needed, so far as our great argument is concerned. His determination to evade the question of miracles is clearly evinced in the cursory manner in which he passes over the greatest of them, the Resurrection of our Lord. He admits that the disciples had an immutably firm faith in this event, but he studiously avoids the responsibility of accounting for this subjective phenomenon.

An objective reality is not, in his opinion, needed to account for it. Indeed, an objective reality, corresponding to or fitted to explain a subjective belief of so extraordinary a character, is, according to the Pantheistic notions of these thinkers, an impossibility. It is enough for us to know that a firm conviction of the bodily resurrection of our Lord was generated in the minds of the disciples, and that this belief converted them into heroes of the first rank. Let us be content with the indisputable fact—the existence of this belief, but let us have nothing to do with the *why*

and the *wherefore*. Is this not evading the difficulty with a vengeance?

The champions of rationalism themselves admit that he has, with reference to this great event, pursued a course which may justly be characterised as both equivocal and evasive. Strauss takes him to task for the want of historical insight shown in the cursory manner in which the great champion of the Tübingen School evades what he calls "the burning question," and shows the importance of the Resurrection of Christ when he expresses the opinion that Christianity "stands or falls" with it. His attempt to explain the miracle is feeble indeed, but his appreciation of it shows more discrimination than has been displayed by Baur in his haphazard, ambiguous remarks thereon.

The theories on which the greatest stress has been laid in these days are two in number, and may be called the trance and visionary theories. The first, revived by Schleiermacher in his *Life of Christ*, assumes that Christ's death was apparent, not real. Christ fell into a swoon, continued in a state of trance for three days, recovered from it, appeared to the disciples, lived with them for a time, and retired to a sequestered place, where He subsequently died.

Now this theory is purely gratuitous. Where, it may be asked, is the necessity of our upholding it in the teeth of the vast body of evidence that may be arrayed in favour of the event? The necessity hinges on the undemonstrated and undemonstrable presupposition of the impossibility of such a break in the chain of natural causes as is implied in the phenomenon of the resurrection of a man slain and buried. The death of Christ is circumstantially related in the New Testament narratives, and is frequently referred to expressly and directly, as well as incidentally and obliquely, in the other books of the canon. And all ecclesiastical, nay, all secular history, with one voice bears testimony in its favour. Yet we must question its reality, and represent

it as apparent, because it does not harmonise with our pre-conceived notions and foregone conclusions'

Strauss himself overturns this theory when he represents it as unfitted to explain the great change that the event confessedly wrought in the minds of the dejected disciples. It is a matter of fact, well attested and indisputable, that this miracle, with that of the effusion of the Holy Spirit, made the timid, wavering, recreant followers of Christ persons of a heroic mould, whose firm faith, sublime courage and extraordinary endurance have rarely been rivalled, certainly never excelled, in the history of the Church, nay in that of the world generally.

How is this internal revolution to be accounted for? The theory in question egregiously fails to account for it. The appearance of Christ after recovery from a death-like trance would only complete or intensify their sorrow and dejection, not confirm their wavering faith and send them forth bright examples of sublime courage and heroic endurance.

The theory in question not merely fails to account for the great change in the minds and hearts of the disciples consequent on the resurrection of our Lord, but it fails as egregiously to account for the great work of regeneration which has flowed from it. A pale, sickly person raised by a process of natural recovery from a death-like trance, breathing life into the dry bones of His disciples, and through them into the whole world—is not this a greater miracle than the resurrection itself? Again, this theory presents our Lord in a questionable light—represents Him, in short, as the utterer of false prophecies and the encourager of false beliefs.

We now come to the most ingeniously constructed and fancifully elaborated theory of the day—that revived and adorned, but not originated, by Strauss. In a former lecture, while discoursing on the mythical explanation of

Christian miracles, we had occasion to give you an insight into the broad features of this showy but worthless theory. It is not, therefore, necessary for us to enlarge upon it, or to make it the subject of a detailed delineation or exhaustive analysis here. Suffice it to say that it is based on a number of presuppositions, not one of which it has been attempted to prove, or it is possible by unassailable historical evidence to prove.

When the Apostles and their companions recovered from the shock consequent on the crucifixion of their beloved Master, they were induced to impart a sacrificial character to His death, and to think of its glory with such intense fervour that it was impossible for them to believe that the grave could have a permanent hold on Him. While they were in this excited frame of mind, their imagination wrought up to the highest pitch, and their expectations intensified by the current traditions of their age and nation, a few weak-minded and morbidly susceptible women hastened to them with reports of the empty tomb, the angelic visions, and the posthumous appearances of Christ. Visions were now the order of the day with these loving and excited souls, and their subjective impressions ultimately ripened into the objective story of the resurrection of our Lord.

Thus the appearance of Christ after His death and burial, the novel ideas associated with them, the glorious change wrought in the inner consciousness of the disciples, the unprecedented success which crowned their preaching, the glorious progress of Christianity, the establishment and ascendancy of the Church, and the moral regeneration of the world, are all, of course, most naturally explained.

Schenkel maintains this theory in a modified form, and brings forward an expression of Paul's—"To reveal His Son in me"—as an indubitable proof of the subjectivity of Christ's appearance to him, as well as of that of all the

posthumous appearances of the Lord recorded in the historical books of the New Testament, and frequently referred to in the others—one such expression being, we suppose, enough to counterbalance all the positive declarations of the Apostle himself scattered up and down in his epistles, and detailed accounts given by him in his reported speeches in the Acts, and in his First Epistle to the Corinthians

And the voluptuous Rénan coolly ascribes the development of what he calls Christian consciousness, and the perennial stream of blessing which has flowed therefrom, to the morbid hallucinations of excited women, and specially to those of the passionately moved and loving spirit of Mary Magdalene!

Now we do not wish to say anything against the inherent beauty or symmetrical development of this attractive theory. It is not at all a difficult thing to prove that it is a tissue of inconsistency, incongruity, and contradiction, but its exposure is not our object, and has not much to do with our argument. Granting that it is—what it is not—a consistent, harmonious, and beautifully elaborated theory, the questions to be settled are—Is it well grounded? and, Is it fitted to explain the phenomena it is intended to account for?

Is the visionary theory, revived by Strauss and endorsed by Schenkel and Rénan, well grounded and based on facts? No, it is, on the contrary, based on a number of gratuitous assumptions. It, in the first place, takes for granted that the disciples had weak minds and diseased bodies, and were, in consequence, susceptible of being easily victimised by hallucinations and phantasms of their own creation.

Nervous debility, resulting in emaciation of the body and disturbance of the balance of the intellect, must, on psychological principles, be presupposed, ere the series of visions which are said to have flitted across the excited minds of the disciples can be accounted for. But what right have

we to assume that such weakness, both bodily and mental, was their portion when our Lord was crucified and buried ? That they were aggrieved and dejected is evident from their writings, but mere sorrow and dejection of spirit, however profound and complete, cannot account for the abnormal condition of the body and the mind which must be presupposed to make the visionary theory reasonable, or philosophically accurate, and therefore tenable

Again, the theory takes for granted that the disciples were anxiously looking for appearances which are associated with the received views of the resurrection of Christ. All the statements found in their writings, and all the circumstances unfolded therein, prove the contrary—prove that they did not at all expect the resurrection of their Master. They had forgotten or failed to appreciate Christ's prophecy with reference to that event, and they evidently looked upon the crucifixion as not merely the complete frustration of their Master's plans, but the equally complete extinction of the fond hopes they had built thereon. The idea that Christ should rise from the grave, and demonstrate thereby the validity of His claim to be regarded as the Saviour of mankind, did not cross their minds even in their dreams. But we must, according to the theory in question, believe, in spite of all declarations to the contrary, that the disciples were eagerly looking for appearances similar to those by which they were ultimately victimised !

Again, the theory takes for granted that the disciples were not men of sound minds, and could not discriminate between visions and objective realities. As Jews read in the sacred literature of their country, they could not but have a thorough insight into the nature of the visions with which their national prophets and teachers had been favoured, and when they relate the visions with which they themselves were favoured, they set forth the subjectivity of these esoteric phenomena in such a clear light, that the assumption is

gratuitous indeed, and utterly groundless, which supposes them incapable of drawing a sharp line of demarcation between subjective impressions and objective facts

And, lastly, the theory takes for granted that the disciples were extremely credulous. The weak-minded and susceptible women had only to relate their hallucinations, and these hardy fishermen and sturdy mechanics were completely victimised. They did not believe in the reports of the women, on the contrary, they looked upon them as idle words. They scarcely believed Peter, to whom the Master appeared, after having shown Himself to Mary Magdalene at the sepulchre, and to the excited women on the way. They even disregarded the reports of the two disciples who had hastened back with the glad tidings from Emmaus, for when their risen Lord stood in their midst, after these confirmatory proofs had been multiplied, they looked upon Him as a spectre. And one of them obstinately turned a deaf ear to all proof, and expressed his determination not to believe in the resurrection of Christ till he had seen in His hands the print of the nails, and put his finger into the print of the nails, and thrust his hand into His side.

We cannot read the narratives of the resurrection without being tempted to take the disciples to task, as their Master did in the case of the two disciples going to Emmaus, for their slowness of heart to believe, if not for their obstinate and unreasonable scepticism. But the manipulators of this fanciful and absurd theory have the goodness to represent them as so credulous that an excited woman has only to relate a vision, not only to secure their homage to a number of wild stories, but to lead them towards a number of evidential and corroborative hallucinations.

The manufacturers of this hypothesis do not pause to dwell on the series of impossibilities which it brings into bold relief. Was it possible that whole companies of men—men of different temperaments, varied constitutions, and

diverse habits of thought—should be victimised at different times and under different circumstances by a series of spectres and phantasms? A few weak-minded and excited women, or a man here and there, might see visions and construe them into objective realities, but does it stand to reason to suppose that entire companies of disciples, men and women, were on several occasions deluded in this extraordinary manner—that a host of five hundred persons were at one and the same time so wrought upon by what is called a chain of sympathy, that their heated imagination conjured up the same hallucinations, and their judgment perpetrated the same errors?

Then, again, these visions were presented to their minds not only when they, being gathered together in particular places, bewailed the death of their Master, or brooded over the misfortunes they had brought upon themselves by believing in Him, but when they were variously occupied Mourning by the graveside, walking in the streets, travelling to a neighbouring village, seated around what may be called a family hearth, and fishing in a lake—do what they might they could not get rid of these visions. But this vision-malady, which prostrated them under all circumstances, did not last long. After a period of excitement had rolled away, after a few paroxysms of hallucination had passed away, these persons returned to their senses, and became sober-minded, sensible, and practical once more.

Do not our rationalistic friends work miracles in their attempt to explain away the miracles recorded in the New Testament? Neither do these gentlemen pause to account for the absence on the part of the Jews, to whom these hallucinations, these phantasms of a diseased imagination, were reported as stubborn facts, of all attempts to set forth their aerial character. Why did they not, when these day-dreams were seriously and solemnly preached, resort to the easiest method of showing their real character? Why

did they not exhume and produce the body of Christ to prove the groundlessness of the fact of His resurrection proclaimed by these excited disciples To say, as Strauss does, that Christ having been hastily interred, the tomb containing His body could not be distinguished, is to ignore the fact—circumstantially narrated by the evangelists—that He made “His grave with the rich in His death.”

But to proceed, not only is this theory based on a number of gratuitous assumptions, but it fails miserably to explain the phenomena which it is concocted to account for It fails, for instance, to account for the origin of the idea of the resurrection among the disciples.

According to the views of the champions of rationalism, the prophecy of Christ with reference to His resurrection had never been uttered, and the declarations of Scripture pointing to that event are dark and ambiguous Nothing in the sayings of Christ, nothing in the whole range of the literature of the Jews, could be supposed fitted to generate and feed the idea of a dead man rising out of the grave in a partially glorified body among the unsophisticated followers of Christ Where or how, then, did they get the idea? By what magical power were they enabled to conceive the idea of bringing on the stage of history a man crucified, dead, and buried, bursting the bands of death, and coming out of the grave in a body which He makes now visible, then invisible, and which is spiritual enough to penetrate through barred doors and thick walls?

The hypothesis, moreover, fails to account for the astonishing change which was confessedly wrought in the inner consciousness and the external demeanour of the disciples These men had, before this event and the effusion of the Spirit with which it is connected, been exceedingly timid, nay, cowardly in their behaviour. They had deserted their Master when arrested—had forsaken Him and fled! They had never dared to meet, “for the fear of the Jews,”

excepting within closed doors and in sequestered places They had surrendered themselves unreservedly into the arms of despondency

These men, so cast down, so sad, and so decidedly victimised by despair, became, subsequent to the resurrection and the consequent outpouring of the Spirit of God, heroes of the first rank. They boldly preached the resurrection in the presence of those infuriated people by whom their Master had been crucified. They proclaimed this glorious fact in the presence not only of the ignorant and the unlettered, but of the wise and the prudent—not only of ordinary men, but of rulers and governors. They did not count their lives dear unto themselves, but, believing that bonds and imprisonments awaited them everywhere, they courageously and joyfully preached salvation through the death, burial, and resurrection of the Master whom they had basely deserted in the darkest hour of His trial. And when actually imprisoned, and threatened by those in authority with severe punishments, they nobly expressed their determination to obey God rather than men, stating that they could not but report the things which they had seen with their eyes.

To what is this astonishing change in their inner life and outer behaviour to be ascribed? According to the theory under review it is to be traced to weak nerves, heated imaginations, and frightful spectres! Does not this supposition involve a greater miracle than the resurrection of our Lord?

Then, again, this hypothesis fails to explain the rapid progress of Christianity in the first two or three centuries of the Christian era. Some of the most civilised nations of antiquity, peoples distinguished by broad intellectual culture and political activity of the most admirable type, were led by a number of poor fishermen to believe in the resurrection of Christ. Wealth was opposed to the fact,

but it was overcome' Authority was arrayed against it, but it had to succumb' Science and philosophy scowled upon it, but their dark frowns were converted into approving smiles' Persecutions were thrown in its way, but they were paralysed' In spite of appalling obstacles thrown by nations, languages, and tongues, so strange a phenomenon as the resurrection of Christ was accepted as a fact of indisputable authenticity in consequence of the preaching of a number of poor, friendless men' Admit that the resurrection was a fact, and all is natural, deny its authenticity, and the splendid progress of Christianity cannot possibly be explained on what are called pragmatic principles—nay, this progress remains a miracle as astounding as the resurrection itself'

Again, the moral regeneration of the world is enshrouded in impenetrable mystery if this fanciful theory is accepted The champions of rationalism admit that a grand, far-reaching moral revolution in what maybe called the inner and outer life of the world has been effected by Christianity The world has, in a word, been regenerated by our holy religion

To what is its regeneration to be traced? To what are the suppression of beastly crimes, the elevation of women, the abolition of polygamy, the sanctification of conjugal life, the appreciation of the value of immortal souls, the organisation of charitable societies, the construction of homes for the destitute and the afflicted, and the immeasurable good done by the missionary enterprise—to what are these moral triumphs to be traced? The hallucinations of weak-minded women, spreading themselves through the contagion of sympathy over the minds of men equally weak-minded' To a series of subjective impressions, converted by ridiculous errors of judgment into objective facts! Believe it who will, we cannot help exclaiming, Here is a greater miracle than the resurrection of our Lord'

No event of bygone times stands on a more solid foundation than this, the central event of this world's history. It is proved by a variety and wealth of evidence such as we never find arrayed in favour of the most glorious facts of ancient—nay, such as we rarely find arrayed in favour of the most glorious facts of modern history. Not a few of the prophetic declarations of the Old Testament bear testimony to this fact of facts. Some of the clearest prophecies uttered by Christ Himself prove its historic certainty as well as its supreme importance. The writings of the evangelists relate it with a circumstantiality and vividness which perfectly vindicate the character of contemporary evidence imparted to them. The Epistles of the other writers of the New Testament corroborate their accounts as well by incidental references as by direct allusions and formal recapitulations. The writings of the Fathers, Apostolic and post Apostolic, present corroborative proofs with equal clearness and profusion. The glorious triumph of Christianity in the early ages of the Church and its present ascendancy presuppose the historic certainty of the great event, and the magnificent moral revolution accomplished by Christianity becomes an inexplicable enigma if its truth is denied. It is, therefore, an unassailable, indisputable fact, and on this rock our religious principles and hopes are based.

The Brahmo proudly points to what he calls the rock of intuition as the sure foundation of his faith. How far this rock is stable may be seen in the Proteus like shapes intuition has assumed in the religious and philosophical vagaries of the world, as well as in the radical changes which the Brahmo creed has undergone during the short period of its existence.

But our Rock is not like theirs, unstable as water! It has stood, unmoved and immovable, for upwards of eighteen hundred years, and it is to-day a tower of strength, a palladium of truth, purity, and holiness. In vain has the oppo-

sition of the world wasted its violence upon it In vain have the wealth of the rich, the power of those in authority, and the influence of a thoughtless aristocracy and a bigoted priesthood been directed against it In vain has human learning discharged its shafts against it In vain has the eagle eye of refined criticism tried to discover a weak point in it In vain have varieties of plausible theories been piled up to bring its historic certainty into disrepute It stands unscrathed, and bears on its broad Atlantean shoulders the moral regeneration of the world and the glorious hopes and joyous anticipations of hosts innumerable saved from the bondage of sin, clad in holiness, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of their bodies Heaven and earth shall pass away, but one jot or tittle of the stubborn facts on which our faith is based cannot pass away !

XVI.

THE CONVERSION OF PAUL.

THE greatest witness by far of the miracle of miracles which formed the subject of our last discourse, is the Apostle Paul, whose clear, unequivocal, and unexceptionable testimony has brought the great champions of rationalism to their wit's end. The great Apostle of the Gentiles not merely expresses his firm faith in the Resurrection of Christ, but brings himself forward as the *last* of the eye-witnesses of that miraculous fact.

In his recorded speeches he traces his conversion from a sworn enemy into a zealous Apostle of Christ, not to means ordinarily employed to bring men from darkness to light, but to a direct interview with the Great Master Himself, vouchsafed to him under extraordinary circumstances. He proves his apostleship, when that is called in question and aspersed, by a bold appeal to the fact of his having seen Christ as the other Apostles had done.

He proves the Church doctrine of the resurrection of the body by an argument based on our Lord's appearances after His death and burial to several of His disciples, singly and collectively, to a company of five hundred men, and last of all to himself, and in perfect astonishment he puts the question, "Now if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?"

His writings present formal and circumstantial notices of

the Resurrection of our Lord, and literally abound with references, incidental and direct, thereto. He invariably represents it as an exhibition of the mighty power of God, and never scruples to bring it forward as the very cornerstone of the Christian faith. He makes it the burden of his preaching, the grand subject of the letters he addresses to rising churches, the strength of his arguments, the centre of his activity in this world, and the basis of his hopes in reference to that which is to come. And he unhesitatingly represents those so called Christians who presumptuously deny it or represent it as merely a moral triumph, not a physical revival, as continuing in their sins. He leads a life of continual and unutterable suffering in consequence of his belief in this fact, and finally—after encountering persecution and perils the very mention of which causes a thrill of shudder to pass through our frames—seals that faith with his blood.

Who will in the teeth of these eloquent utterances and more eloquent facts dare affirm that the great turning-point of his extraordinary career of philanthropic labour and suffering was only a subjective impression, not an objective fact? If, however, such an assertion be considered worthy of a formal notice and refutation, that which brings Paul forward as a witness for the truth of the Visionary Theory is too absurd to be supposed fitted to indicate a sane mind.

Yet this last assertion—which makes the great Apostle of the Gentiles the first propounder of a fanciful, inconsistent, and contradictory hypothesis—yet this assertion has been hazarded by those who call themselves *par excellence* children of reason. On what is it based? On a solitary verse in the first chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, in which he speaks of God as having been pleased to reveal His Son *in* him.

This solitary verse—which is susceptible of an interpre-

tation in harmony with the received theory of the Church—is brought forward as enough to counterbalance the overwhelming mass of evidence in the Apostle's discourses and letters, as well as in his life and sufferings, in favour of the objectivity of the vision to which he traces his wonderful conversion ! Do not our rationalistic friends enter upon the examination of the Bible with foregone conclusions, and only accept such statements as are fitted to prop them up ?

But the conversion of Paul has not merely been brought forward as an evidence of the corporeal resurrection of our Lord, it has been made the basis of an independent or separate argument in favour of our religion Lyttelton in his short but valuable treatise on this subject presents his argument in all its force, showing in a masterly manner that the great change in Paul's sentiment and life wrought in the vicinity of and in Damascus cannot be rationally explained except by supposing the truth of Christianity—that is, except by looking upon it as a miracle wrought by Christ

His plan is simple He first gives an account of Paul's conversion almost in his own words, then states the alternatives which the event so related places before us, and finally, after showing the untenableness of those unfavourable to the great Apostle, sets forth the reasonableness of that which represents the fact as truly miraculous, and therefore an independent and irrefragable proof of the truth of Christianity

A considerable portion of his argument may be characterised as behind the age, and will scarcely bear reproduction A considerable portion, if not the largest portion by far, of the treatise in question, is occupied with proofs fitted to show that Paul was not an impostor In these days, however, the fact that Paul was not an impostor or cheat is so universally recognised among educated and thoughtful

people, that a formal attempt to prove it may be stigmatised as a work of supererogation

But amongst the learned, even men are not wanting who, while full of the warmest admiration of the lofty principles and disinterested life of the great Apostle, are not reluctant to attribute a little of what may be called benevolent cunning or pious fraud, to him, while there are hundreds of persons amongst educated men in this country who, being wholly ignorant of the body of literature about the subject under consideration, may be tempted to accept the alternative most unfavourable to his character

For the benefit especially of persons whom these lectures are intended to influence for good, it is desirable, nay even necessary, to reproduce Lyttelton's argument in all its entirety and force. Our plan is therefore this—we will in the first place give Paul's own account of his conversion, and then present the argument, in of course a brief manner, based on it by Lyttelton in favour of the truth of our holy religion, and finally take notice of and refute the theories advanced by modern critics to explain it away

I. Paul's account of his own conversion—an account given in detail in two of his speeches recorded in the Acts of the Apostles and confirmed by corroborative notices scattered up and down in his Epistles—may be embodied in a few words. Paul was a thoroughgoing, conscientious, and earnest Pharisee, and as such considered it is his duty to put down coercively the rising religion of the crucified Nazarene

Being a young man of an ardent temperament, firm purpose and indomitable will, and being, moreover, incapable of doing things by halves, he brought all the powers of his capricious intellect and mighty spirit, as well as his physical powers of toil and endurance, to the work of destruction before him

He spared himself no labour, he fled from no danger he

shrank from no suffering. He did not even recoil from the dire consequences of his own cruelty, from the sad spectacle of men, women, and children of a quiet deportment and inoffensive character, dragged like felons from street to street, lashed in thoroughfares, thrust into dungeons and butchered on the scaffold, for the crime solely of worshipping their God according to the dictates of their conscience.

He took charge of the upper garments of the party of executioners by whom the proto-martyr of the Christian Church Stephen, was stoned to death. He initiated a system of rigid search and fearful persecution in Jerusalem, going from house to house, arresting and committing to prison men and women found guilty of professing the new faith.

Not content with putting forth efforts to put down Christianity in Judæa, he went to the High Priest, and "desired of him letters to Damascus, to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem."

Armed with such letters, and "breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," he marched forward, escorted by men who shared, it may be supposed, in his feelings of antipathy, as well as in his prodigious labours.

As he approached the city, from which he expected to root out the growing evil of what seemed an anti-Levitical faith, he saw at mid-day "a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about him and them which journeyed with him." He fell cowering on the earth, and heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" He tremblingly inquired, "Who art thou, Lord?" The voice replied, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." "What wilt Thou have me to do?" he inquired. "Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do," was the

reply. The proud Pharisee and the ruthless persecutor, thus directed, goes to Damascus a new man, his eyes blinded by the dazzling light, his heart humbled, and the bent of his indomitable will changed.

In Damascus he continues three days without food and drink, weeping over his past sins, and praying in a spirit the antipodes of that in which he had said his Pharisaic prayers. A man named Ananias, directed by the Lord, comes to him, touches his eyes, causes something like scales to fall from them, and baptizes him. He eats some food, and as soon as he feels refreshed and strengthened he goes forth to preach in the public streets of Damascus the religion he had come to destroy.

An attempt is made to take away his life, and he escapes by being let down from a window in a basket at night when the city gates are closed, and the thick walls cut him off from the ordinary means of egress. He goes into Arabia, and there—probably in a sequestered place—he is favoured with visions and revelations, as well as perhaps with prolonged interviews with the Great Master, and thereby prepared for the hazardous enterprise before him.

Thus equipped, he goes forth as a missionary—travels far and wide, preaching his adopted faith, planting churches, raising up congregations, manifesting his zeal in herculean labours, braving hardships of an appalling character, and passing through persecutions and perils such as we cannot read of without astonishment.

Here is the list of his unutterable sufferings—"Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep, in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren, in weariness and

painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness "

Having encountered all these hardships and persecutions, and having braved the varieties of distresses proceeding from what he calls the "care of the churches," he seals his faith in Christ and his testimony to the truth of Christianity with his blood !

The alternatives presented by the eloquent facts are these either Paul was an impostor, or he was an enthusiast, or he was in truth converted by the power of Christ, as described by him in detail, and referred to by him in innumerable direct and incidental notices The alternatives range between some defect in Paul's mind and character and the truth of Christianity Let us weigh them, one by one, in the balance of calm and dispassionate reasoning, and see which of them appears worthy of acceptance, and which worthy of rejection or summary dismissal from the sphere of our convictions

Was Paul an impostor, or one who deliberately fabricated a false story—the story, namely, of his conversion—and palmed it off as true? The answer of his life is, No ! Just as the life of our Lord makes the supposition of imposture on His part, or the supposition which attributes imposture to Him, too absurd and horrible to be entertained for a moment, such a hypothesis in the case of the greatest of His Apostles is at first sight too grossly ludicrous to be taken into our serious consideration

The life of Christ precludes the possibility of our ascribing fraud, duplicity, or knavery to Him The life of Paul, in a manner similar in kind though not in degree, precludes the possibility of our ascribing fraud, duplicity, or knavery to him Such an earnest life, a life wholly consecrated to the service of God and spent for the good of mankind, such a pious, philanthropic, glorious life, receiving its inspiration from nothing higher than a concealed purpose to deceive !

Such an exalted character, a character in which the virtues rarely found in combination are blended into a harmonious whole, and the defects are thrown into the shade by the perfections,—a character so bright and glorious moulded and fashioned in the school of dissimulation and fraud !

Such a series of holy resolves, noble purposes, earnest labours, heroic sufferings, and grand achievements, with nothing better than a fabricated story, or a dogmatic invention, as its motive principle ! The ideas are too horrible to be entertained for a moment. We might as well ascribe the regular, solemn, and mystical revolutions of the heavenly bodies to the power I exhibit when I wave my hand before you ! The puny power of my will cannot account for the varied but regular movements of which the heavens above our heads are the glorious scene, no more can the puny influence of fraud explain the glorious excellencies of Paul's character, the glorious sacrifices of Paul's life, and the glorious successes of Paul's career

It is not necessary for us to resort to the cogent arguments brought forward by Lyttelton to prove the transparent sincerity of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, his perfect freedom from the slightest touch of imposture and knavery. And this the champions of the negative criticism of the age are perfectly willing to admit. They naturally and instinctively shrink from the responsibility of holding up a prince of men, such as Paul was, as an example of daring imposture and successful cunning. They recoil from the villainy of looking upon and representing Paul as an impostor. We read the life of Paul as depicted in the Acts of the Apostles, and made manifest in incidental notices in his own writings, and the inevitable result is that our instincts are marshalled against the alternative which ascribes fraud or imposture to him.

It is not necessary, as we have already said, to reproduce

the irrefragable proofs adduced by Lyttelton to prove Paul's transparent sincerity, or his freedom from the slightest touch of dissimulation or fraud. But as there are relics of a by-gone age amongst our educated countrymen, men who, in their hostility to the religion of Christ, exhibit a spirit ludicrously out of date, the old battle may be fought once more. Paul could not possibly have any rational motives to subserve in the course of daring imposture to which he, in the opinion of the persons who adopt the alternative most unfavourable to his character, betook himself.

Let us particularise the motives which make men impostors, or to which well-known cases of religious imposture may and should be traced. Love of wealth is one of these unworthy motives. But this motive could not possibly have actuated Paul. Avarice or cupidity could not possibly have entered into or formed a prominent element of a character so lofty and disinterested as his. If that had been a motive power or propelling force in his case, he would have acted in a manner the very antipodes of that in which he actually did act. He would have continued in a state of union with the party possessed of boundless wealth, the millionaires of his nation, the chief priests and rulers of the Jews. He would have continued where his avarice could be gratified, where money could be obtained in rich abundance, and he could raise himself without much difficulty to the position of a wealthy, opulent man.

He would certainly have never dreamt of joining a community whose poverty was only equalled by the universal contempt in which they were held, who were perfectly penniless, and who could not secure even the necessaries of life without evolving a sort of communism amongst them. Love of wealth, therefore, cannot account for the altered career which in the case of the great Apostle began in his alleged conversion.

Was love of power, a soaring, consuming ambition, his

actuating principle, his motive power? No, that was no element of his exalted character. If love of power had been the dominant principle of his soul he would have pursued a course the very reverse of that which he actually did follow. He would have continued in union with the party possessed of most boundless power, the great statesmen and governors of his nation, the members of the Sanhedrim, who within certain limits exercised a sort of sovereign power, he would have continued where his ambition might be gratified, where power might be obtained, and he might raise himself to the position of a high officer of State.

He would certainly have never dreamt of joining a community as completely destitute of power as they were of wealth, he would not certainly have left the highest functionaries of his nation and joined a company of fishermen and peasants to invest himself with authority and power. Love of power, therefore, could not have been his constraining principle in the changed life he led.

Was the lust of reputation his guiding principle? No. If that had been the ruling trait of his character, the predominant passion of his heart, he would never have acted as he did. What reputation could he possibly acquire by joining a community universally despised, a body of men of low origin and mean occupation, who had, moreover, rendered themselves doubly contemptible by casting in their lot with the crucified Nazarene? The fact that he forsook the representatives and dispensers of wealth, power, and fame, and joined the children of poverty, indigence, obscurity, and universal contempt, shows that he could not possibly have been guided in his choice of the hardships and dangers of his apostolic career by these and such-like motives.

This is further proved by the fact that he cheerfully eschewed these advantages when they were, not in their

more desirable but in their humbler types, within his reach. When he had succeeded in establishing churches in all the large cities of the Roman world he might have made himself to some extent wealthy, if he had eagerly availed himself of the money or valuable things which they would have gladly given him.

But, far from endeavouring to make himself rich by adroitly securing money out of the numerous churches which he planted and built up, he did not even accept what was due to him—did not even derive his support from them. He gave up a right exercised by his brother Apostles, the right of being maintained by the people over whose spiritual interests he watched with more than paternal solicitude.

He also had splendid opportunities of attaining to power and authority of an excessive and exorbitant character, but, far from availing himself of these opportunities, he indignantly repelled them. When some people tried to make his venerated name the battle-cry of a party, he indignantly exclaimed, "Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" Though a man of learning, and socially and intellectually superior to all his brother Apostles, who were not educated men in the generally accepted sense of the term, he never tried to place himself above them, or claimed an authority superior to what they might justly represent themselves entitled to.

We may observe in passing that the fact that the Apostles, though scattered all over the world, and engaged in planting churches and forming the nuclei of Christian communities in different places without anybody to look after them or supervise their work, never availed themselves of the means of personal aggrandisement placed within their reach by their position, but uniformly sought to glorify their great Master, representing themselves as His servants, and attributing their unparalleled successes to His

grace, is one of the strongest proofs that can be given of their sincerity

But it may be said that, though Paul had no schemes of self-aggrandisement to carry out in the extraordinary course he adopted, he might have been actuated by the baser motive of gratifying his vicious passions and appetites. Are we then to trace his alleged conversion to a concealed desire on his part to give loose to the grosser elements of his nature, his vicious propensities and appetites?

We dare not. The life he led, with its marked purity and holiness, its elevation and grandeur, is a standing protest against assumptions so grossly libellous. The character he displayed, the work he accomplished, the doctrines he taught, the morality he held up and exemplified, his thoughts, words, and deeds, all concur in proving him to have been a man incapable of surrendering himself to the baser instincts of his nature. Far from seeking to gratify improper lusts and illicit desires, he voluntarily debarred himself from many of the allowable pleasures of life. By an act of self-denial unusual even among the Apostles, he doomed himself to celibacy, and abstained, as we have already said, from exercising his right to be supported by the churches he planted and edified.

It may, moreover, be said that Paul had recourse, as many of the sages and legislators of antiquity had had before him, to some pious frauds for the purpose of propagating a faith which he believed to be beneficent in a prominent degree to the world. The story of his conversion was not what is called a dogmatic fabrication, but an invention consciously resorted to by the great Apostle, to secure popular acceptance for a faith eminently calculated, in his opinion, to promote the public weal or welfare.

But barring the fact that Paul did not initiate or originate any change either in religion or in legislation, the question confronts us, How did Paul know that the religion, to

spread which he was willing to resort to execrable tricks, was calculated to promote public good? The effects of this religion around him spoke a different language, or tended to lead to a different conclusion. Instead of bringing in its train secular influence, wealth, honour, fame, and comfort, it led its followers to poverty, dishonour, reproaches, bonds, imprisonments, and the most repulsive forms of violent death.

Lyttelton justly observes that those who adhered to this religion without believing in it were mad, and that those who propagated it with all the distresses of which it was the fruitful cause were more than mad!

But suppose that Paul did, in spite of all deterrent circumstances, resort to a wicked fraud to propagate the faith he had worked hard to destroy, could he have succeeded? He could not possibly have succeeded except by acting in concert with the Apostles and disciples, who were, properly speaking, the living depositories of all reliable knowledge concerning the life and career of our Lord. It is to be observed that at the early date when Paul joined the party of the first preachers of Christianity, there were no books extant from which information regarding the doctrines and facts of Christianity could be obtained. With a view to obtain such information, Paul could have no alternative but to resort to the Apostles and their coadjutors.

But supposing that they were all impostors—an unworthy supposition, never entertained even for a moment in these days—would they have favoured him with their confidence? Would they have disclosed to him secrets which, inimical as he was to their cause, he might utilise in bringing swift destruction upon them and the faith they were engaged in propagating? Would they have given him an insight into what might be called the sinuosities of that plan, which he might with the greatest ease frustrate by simply unfolding

and holding up to public hatred the frauds connected with it?

Even if Paul was desirous, madly desirous to aid the Apostles in the execution of their fraudulent plans, he could not possibly, circumstanced as he was, have gained their confidence, and acted in confederation with them. And without forming an alliance with them, or without acting in concert with them, he could not possibly have carried out his nefarious purposes. But suppose that by some magical art, some unaccountable and inexplicable manœuvre, he did succeed in ingratiating himself with the first preachers of Christianity so far as to draw them to an indiscreet disclosure of their fraudulent and tortuous policy, what ground had he for believing that his daring imposture would be crowned with success?

A sensible impostor, such as according to the hypothesis Paul was, never stakes his honour on a plan which is too Quixotic or visionary to be practicable, or which is sure to end in miserable discomfiture. Sensible and sagacious as Paul was, he could not but see that his great plan of bringing the Gentile world over to the faith, which was being spread by imposture and fraud, was not merely of a romantic, visionary description, but of a nature sure to end in frustration and defeat.

In his adopted sphere of labour he was destined to have nothing in his favour, and everything to oppose and neutralise him. He could not expect to find in those great cities of the Gentile world which were to be the theatres of his marvellous activity, a single person of influence to help him, a single propitious circumstance or a single happy turn of the wheel of fortune to favour his cause, or to contribute its quota towards the accomplishment of his great object.

And he had reason to expect to see all things in these centres of his missionary career marshalled against him—

wealth, influence, power, authority, learning, and ingenuity. He had every reason to expect opposition from the authorities or rulers, who, though infected with prevailing scepticism, were interested in maintaining the existing order of things in matters of faith, from the priesthood the members of which could scarcely live without decrying and putting down coercively even the shadow of an innovation in religion, from the representatives of learning and philosophy who, though the recognised champions of free thought, believed that the masses could not be properly guided and controlled except through the media of current systems of belief, and from the people in general whose passions and boisterous feelings were stimulated as soon as they saw anything done or heard anything said to the prejudice of institutions amid which they had been brought up.

All classes of the population of the cities he was to visit were to be arrayed against him, and not a single circumstance fitted to help forward his project could he foresee on the supposition that he was an impostor and a knave. Under such circumstances he could not launch out in this impracticable and hazardous enterprise without being absolutely mad.

Grant that he had truth with its inherent beauty and persuasive power on his side, grant that he had the Spirit of God to cheer him on and the power of God to help him, and the alacrity and enthusiasm with which he commenced and carried on his work are explicable enough. But admit that he was consciously propping up and spreading a lie in the teeth of these overwhelming difficulties, and we cannot account for his career without attributing to him such madness as we are sure he could not be properly or justly charged with.

But could not Paul pretend to miraculous powers, and thereby overcome the appalling obstacles in the way of the execution of his deep-laid plan? Could he not dazzle

the populace into a new faith by the splendour of false miracles and lying wonders? Yes—he could have done this if he had been in league or confederation with current phases of faith and men of authority and influence. If his pretended miracles had been wrought in favour of the types of faith prevailing around him, he might certainly have found people prepossessed in his favour and ready to give easy credence to them.

Again, if his pretensions had been favoured by influential parties, the rulers or the priests, he might have easily imposed upon the credulity of common people. But these favourable conditions did not exist in his case, inasmuch as he was engaged in propagating a new and hostile faith, and was in consequence opposed by all classes of people, both influential and non-influential.

He had the same difficulty in the Gentile world which Christ and His apostles had in Jewry or the land of Palestine, the hostility of all classes of people leading to a plenitude of vigilance and watchfulness on their part. And his miracles, if not genuine, would have, instead of sustaining his reputation and furthering his work, irretrievably damaged and ruined both.

On the whole, therefore, we may fairly conclude that Paul was *not* an impostor, a man engaged in propagating a falsehood of which he was thoroughly or even partially conscious. As an impostor he could not possibly have succeeded, and the brilliant success which attended his labours wherever he went is an irrefragable argument in favour of his sincerity, if not in favour of the validity of his claim as an accredited messenger of Christ miraculously converted, and consequently of the truth of Christianity.

And the conclusion is further confirmed by the argument which we adduced in conjunction with others to prove that Christ could not possibly have been an impostor. Paul did not fall in with or truckle to current traditions—a course

invariably adopted by sensible pretenders, who are aware that in proportion as they oppose prevalent sentiments and feelings they diminish their chance of bringing their fraudulent designs to a successful issue

Was Paul then an enthusiast or a person predisposed to be duped or gulled by tricks skilfully manipulated, or by some natural, though extraordinary and unaccountable appearance Lyttelton shows the untenable character of this supposition by enumerating the varied ingredients of enthusiasm or fanaticism, and showing that they did not exist in or disfigure the character of the great Apostle These are heat of temper, melancholy, ignorance, credulity, and vanity or immoderate self-esteem

But these elements of character cannot with justice be attributed to Paul, who had a cultured and balanced intellect, and well-regulated feelings He was certainly a man of an ardent temperament and buoyant feelings, but he never allowed these to get the better of his judgment or to control his reason and common sense.

With firmness and inflexibility of purpose, such as we cannot contemplate without the warmest feelings of admiration, he combined a conciliatory and yielding disposition that bespoke refinement of education and admirable self-control Firm as a rock in the high matters of religion, he was, in matters indifferent, all things to all men, and when brought before the ruling authorities of his native and other lands he invariably showed an amount of courtesy such as is never exhibited by the misguided devotees of rant and fanaticism

His nature was marvellously free from melancholy Though never backward in bewailing the sins of his youth, the work of destruction he had ignorantly accomplished in the Church of God, he never abandoned himself to moroseness and melancholy, to gloomy thoughts and dark forebodings He did not betake himself, as men of a melancholy

disposition generally do, to mortifications and penances ; nor did he court persecution or evince an immoderate partiality for the glory of martyrdom

The prudence and sagacity with which he at times avoided persecution cannot be sufficiently praised Witness his conduct at Athens There was a law in that boasted city threatening to inflict capital punishment on any person found guilty of propagating a new faith , and Paul, without the slightest compromise of principle, evaded the threatened punishment, when standing before the court of Areopagus charged with being a setter forth of strange gods, by availing himself of the altar to *the unknown God* he had noticed

As to ignorance, it cannot be charged upon a man of superior education, well read not merely in the literature of his nation, but in that of Greece and Rome, the chosen homes of culture in his age Scepticism, rather than credulity, seems to have been an element of his character Look at the amount of evidence which he resisted, and in the teeth of which he carried out his schemes of murderous persecution

The stupendous miracles of Christ of which he could not but have heard, and of the truth of which he could easily convince himself, the scarcely less stupendous miracles wrought by the Apostles before, in one sense, his own eyes, the sublime composure and fortitude of Stephen when he was stoned to death, the heavenly radiance of the proto-martyr's countenance when he prayed for his enemies , the heroic endurance and glorious faith of the parties whom he dragged into imprisonment or caused to be lashed and tortured—all these eloquent and extraordinary facts had been literally lost upon him, or rather had produced in him an effect the very antipodes of what they are fitted to generate in the human mind

To represent a man who resisted and acted in contravention of so irrefragable a series of proofs as a child of

credulity, a man likely to be duped by a meteoric appearance or a flimsy trick, is simply absurd. Nor can the charge of vanity be with any degree of justice preferred against him. What had been emphatically said of the greatest man of the old dispensation may with equal emphasis be said of the greatest man of the new.

Paul, like Moses, was the meekest, humblest, and the most modest of men. Though crowned with the halo of a piety and consecration to which the history of the Church affords no parallel, he calls himself the chief of sinners, and though in labours and in sufferings more abundant than his colleagues, he represents himself as less than the least of the Apostles. The manner in which he relates the heavenly vision with which he was favoured—a vision grander perhaps than any by which human eyes have been refreshed—brings his characteristic modesty into bold relief. He relates this glorious vision because compelled by his adversaries to do so—relates it in the third person with many an apology, and in the shortest and simplest manner conceivable, and he winds up his brief account by giving prominence to his own weakness in a supplementary statement, the avowed object of which is to prevent his reader from thinking of him above that which they saw him to be, or heard of him.

It is not thus that religious fanatics speak when they relate in a grandiloquent style and with all possible exaggeration the pseudo visions and revelations which they represent themselves as having been favoured with! It is not thus that religious fanatics speak of what is fitted to raise them in the estimation of their misguided followers!

But granting that Paul had, and that in rich abundance, these elements of an ill-balanced and ill-regulated character, the great problem of his sudden and thorough conversion remains an impenetrable mystery. Supposing that Paul was a fanatic, and that of the wildest order, his fanaticism would have, according to known laws of development,

taken a turn the reverse of what it actually did take. He would have seen visions and dreamed of revelations such as would have confirmed and strengthened his antipathy to the Church of Christ, not such as would have thrown his feelings into an entirely new channel.

While going to Damascus, with the avowed object of rooting out the new faith from that city, his mind was full of murderous thoughts, and his heart full of fell purposes, and if he were a fanatic he would have seen, not Christ putting a stop, by an external and internal miracle, to his mad career, but Moses, or some one of the grand old prophets of the old dispensation, cheering him on with smiles of approbation, and blowing the fire already kindled in his bosom into an unquenchable flame.

He would have seen the predominant thoughts of his mind, not ideas to which he was most decidedly opposed, worked up by the magic of a heated imagination into visions and revelations, he would have seen, in phantoms of his own creation, abundant reason to persist in his resolute fight against Christianity, not certainly a reason in a supernatural appearance of Him whom he looked upon as a blasphemer, to change his thoroughgoing hostility into the warmest friendship and the most single-eyed devotion.

The hypothesis of fanaticism on the part of Paul does not extricate the great problem of his life from the difficulty in which it is, on the natural explanation theory, enveloped. The question also rises, How could Paul's fanaticism, supposing the miracle leading to his conversion was the fruit of his overheated imagination, victimise his attendants, who fell down on the ground as he did, and who heard the sound of a noise without catching the words spoken?

And finally, How could his fanaticism overleap the walls and turrets of Damascus, obtain an easy victory over and make captive poor Ananias, by whom Paul was baptized? To get rid of a miracle circumstantially narrated and con-

firmed by unexceptionable testimony recourse is had to a number of enigmas, each of which is more inexplicable on the natural explanation theory than a miracle can possibly be !

It is proper to take notice here of the theories resorted to by the champions of negative criticism to account for the sudden and unexpected conversion of the great Apostle of the Gentiles. That he was not an impostor they admit with a unanimity and an alacrity such as renders the formal presentation of the proofs piled up under this head by Lyttelton perfectly superfluous. They, moreover, admit that the elements of fanaticism enumerated by that excellent writer did not enter into his character. But yet they do not hesitate to trace his conversion to a subjective rather than to an objective appearance of Christ. As Pantheists they take for granted the impossibility of the supernatural, and they can have no alternative but to resort, in explication of the apparently miraculous change in life of the Apostle, to what they are pleased to call, in their pompous style, the law of immanent development.

The vision narrated by Paul could not but have been subjective, and it is easily accounted for in two different ways by Baur and his school, and by Strauss and his followers. Baur opines that he had doubts in his mind as to the propriety of the course he was pursuing, and was, in short, thinking of Christ, when he dreamed of a light at mid-day above the brightness of the sun, and of a phantom expostulating with him in tones of authority as well as condescension. Paul had gone to one extreme, and his sudden transition to the other might have been antecedently expected. His interpretation of the law might be incorrect, current notions of the spirit of Messianic prophecy might be groundless, prevalent traditions might have received their colour and complexion from false hopes and misguided susceptibilities, there might be in the idea of a crucified

Saviour a deep meaning of which he was ignorant, and Jesus of Nazareth might after all be the personage foreshadowed in the institutions and observances to which he was so warmly attached

Such was the tenour of his thoughts when he was approaching the city, from which he had been authorised at his own request to bring professors of the new faith bound unto Jerusalem. What wonder that his doubts and misgivings effloresced into the vision which he mistook for an objective appearance of our Lord

Strauss presents a version similar in some respects to Baur's, but divergent in others. He agrees with his great "master" in ascribing the sudden conversion of the great Apostle to a vision of a subjective character proceeding solely and wholly from subjective conditions, but he maintains that the tenour of his thoughts was somewhat different from that assumed by Baur

Paul was not thinking of the possible fulfilment of legal observances and prophetic utterances in a crucified Nazarene, but he was thinking of "the disputations" he had had with the Christians he had been persecuting, and contrasting the peace and joy they had shown amid trying circumstances with the disquietude and turmoil he was experiencing within him

Above all, he was thinking of the sublime faith evinced by Stephen when stoned to death by the company of executioners, of whose clothes he had taken charge. Such heroic endurance, such calm trust, so much greatness of mind and spirit, could not be associated with an execrable heresy, which deserved to be washed away with the blood of its upholders. Perhaps he was mistaken and as he revolved these doubts in his mind, a glorious but subjective vision was conjured up, and became the grand turning-point of his life. Where was the necessity of our supposing a miraculous interference with the laws of nature

for the purpose of accounting for a phenomenon so easily explained!

Now we cannot sufficiently admire the ingenuity with which these beautiful theories have been elaborated, nor have we found any fault with them excepting this trifling one—viz, that they are based upon dreams rather than facts. Both these so-called natural explanations proceed upon the supposition that Paul while rushing towards Damascus had some misgivings as to the propriety of the course he was pursuing, and that he had such thoughts in his mind as could not but develop into the vision which his overheated imagination construed into an objective fact.

The suppositions and the explanations stand or fall together. If the suppositions are well-grounded or correct, the explanations are unassailable, but if the foundation is weak and crazy the superstructure cannot possibly be firm and durable. If it can be satisfactorily proved that Paul had in his mind misgivings as to the propriety of his conduct, and favourable thoughts about Christianity, the vision he relates might have been one of a subjective character, and the explanations fitted to prove its subjectivity might be accepted.

~~A vision is reproductive~~, and its germs must exist in the mind before its development is realised, and if it can be proved that the vision to which Paul traced his conversion existed in a germinal type in his mind when he was approaching Damascus, the natural explanations offered by Baur and Strauss and their numerous coadjutors and followers may be accepted as satisfactory.

But what right have we to assume that this glorious vision existed in an embryonic form in the Apostle's mind as he was rushing on in his headlong career of opposition to Christianity? What right have we to assume that Paul had misgivings in his mind as to the propriety of his course conjoined with thoughts favourable to the crucified Naza-

rene? Paul is silent on this matter, and the New Testament writers as a body are silent

These misgivings and favourable thoughts have been evolved from the historic consciousness of these eminent critics, rather than from anything said by the Apostle himself, or his colleagues and brother penmen. Nay, Paul not merely says nothing with reference to the doubts and compunctions attributed to him, but he says what makes it positively unjust to ascribe such phases of thought or states of consciousness to him. He gives us an insight into his feelings at the time when he was persecuting the Church, and what we see is a strong conviction that he was doing God's will in trying to root out the new faith. So the psychological conditions of the vision which gave a new turn to the marvellous energy of Paul are assumed rather than proved, or, in plainer words, the hypothesis on which the beautiful explanations brought forward by the champions of negative criticism stand is a dream!

These gentlemen have, moreover, taken for granted that Paul was a man of nervous temperament, and so, not merely psychologically but constitutionally predisposed to visions like the one by which he was victimised. What ground have we for supposing that Paul had a diseased body as well as a morbidly excitable mind? What ground? Does not Paul himself speak of a thorn in his flesh? What can it possibly be, excepting "epileptic fits," nervous debility, neuralgia, and all those bodily diseases put together which lead men to mistake dreams for realities and visions for objective facts?

Unfortunately for these theorists, Paul's wonderful career shows that he was a man of a sound mind and a robust, healthy constitution, a constitution which years of prodigious toil and unutterable suffering could not undermine. In this case both the physical and the mental condition or basis of the visionary theory is wanting.

But another fact has been brought forward in support of the ingenious explanations under review Does not Paul circumstantially relate a glorious vision which overpowered him when he was "caught up to the third heaven, and heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter"? And does not this fact show that he was predisposed to visions, and that therefore that to which he traces his conversion could not have been anything more than a subjective vision?

Supposing that this was a vision in the ordinary sense of the term, and that there was no objective reality corresponding to it, how can it be made the basis of the supposition that he was predisposed to visions? Because a man relates a vision which he saw fourteen years ago, and which has evidently not been repeated during this long interval, are we to conclude that he has an excitable temperment, a heated imagination, and a morbid mind easily victimised by hallucinations of the eye and the ear? Is this not building a huge superstructure on a slender basis, a pyramid upon a point?

Besides, Paul himself draws a sharp line of demarcation between this vision, which no one saw but himself, and the miracle connected with his conversion, which was witnessed by all his companions, and which was followed by a physical blindness miraculously healed He represents this last as a miracle fitted to convince the sceptical and the unbelieving of the truth of Christianity, while he refers to the first to vindicate, among believers who did not for a moment doubt his veracity, his apostolic authority from the aspersions cast upon it by his malicious adversaries

The miracle connected with his conversion he holds up as susceptible of historical proof besides his own testimony, while the vision with which he was favoured subsequent to that great change rests on his testimony alone, and cannot be historically proved apart from it, just as the alleged

night march of Mohammed rests solely and wholly on the testimony of the Prophet, and cannot be historically proved apart from it

Again, because this miracle was followed by other circumstances of a miraculous character, every hypothesis but that which assumes its genuineness falls to the ground Lyttelton anticipates the ingeniously elaborated theories of the day when he shows the impossibility of Paul's companions being victimised by a mistake to which he might fall a victim

Suppose he saw a vision, would its appearance to him necessarily mean or be tantamount to its appearance to his companions also? Were the mental conditions for such a vision contagious, insomuch that he could not be dejected or have a heated imagination without communicating his dejection or the fervour of his mind to them? Or were the physical conditions for such a vision catching, insomuch that he could not have weak nerves or epileptic fits without communicating these maladies to his fellow-travellers and fellow-labourers

But let us suppose that Paul and his companions saw a meteor, and heard a rumbling noise in the heavens, which they mistook for the sound of a human voice, will not such a supposition obviate the necessity of our believing in a supernatural interference with the laws of nature? No, because there are in connection with the central miracle other miraculous facts which cannot be so explained away—viz, Paul's blindness when his companions were *not* smitten blind, Christ's appearance to Ananias, the information regarding his whereabouts at Damascus miraculously communicated to the astonished disciple, the scales which fell from his eyes, not to speak of the marvellous change effected in the purposes and feelings of his heart, the thoughts of his mind, and the events of his life

A meteor might prostrate him and his companions on the ground, and say it could confer upon him an unenviable

pre-eminence by making him blind while his companions had their eyesight left intact, but it could not inform Ananias of his whereabouts and devotional exercises, miraculously heal his eyes by causing something like scales to fall from them, give him a new heart and a new spirit, and send him on a new errand amid appalling sufferings, the very mention of which causes the blood to freeze in the heart !

But the short argument, which satisfactorily proves that Paul could not have been an enthusiast or a dupe, as well as that which proves that he could not have been a deceiver, hinges on the splendid achievements of his life subsequent to his conversion

To what are we in the first place to ascribe the grand change wrought in him ? To what are we to ascribe the equally sudden implantation in his heart of an ardent love of Christ in conjunction with the spirit of self-abnegation, humility, patience, meekness, forbearance, charity ? To what is this great internal revolution to be traced ?

To weak nerves, diseased brain, and morbid hallucinations ? You might as well trace with rabid Roman Catholics the glorious Reformation of the sixteenth century, with its long train of blessings, material, intellectual, and moral, to Luther's impatience under the vow of celibacy he had taken and his secret desire to get married

Again, to what are the glorious achievements of his life to be traced, the numerous churches he was instrumental in rearing, the glorious revolution he accomplished in the Western World, the piety, the benevolence, the zeal, and the heroism which, emanating from his lofty example, deluged communities, nations, languages, and tongues ?

The ascendancy of the Church in Europe, and the glorious type of civilisation under which its most honoured countries are smiling in these days, are under God to be connected with the Herculean labours of the great Apostle

of the Gentiles as effects are connected with their productive causes To what are these to be traced? To epileptic fits, a morbidly excitable temperament, an overheated imagination, a series of subjective visions, or a meteor mistaken for a miracle? You might as well trace the splendid achievements of astronomical science to the fall of an apple *apart from* the train of thought it suggested to Sir Isaac Newton

Admit the genuineness of the physical miracle to which Paul traced his conversion, and the moral miracle he wrought subsequent to it is easily explained—deny that miracle, and the splendid triumphs of his life are inexplicable mysteries

Paul was not a pretender nor a fanatic, neither a deceiver nor a dupe, and the Personage who appeared to him as he was advancing eagerly towards Damascus was none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, whom “the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world begun” And this miracle, let us add, presupposes the genuineness of the resurrection of Christ, and the glorious train of miracles which culminated in that event

Here, therefore, is another of the collateral lines of proof by which the miraculous story of our Lord’s life contained in the Gospels is confirmed, and a line of argument, moreover, which, apart from those with which it is associated, is enough to prove the truth of Christianity What a vast body of evidence you must resist in order to justify your attitude, either of careless apathy or of positive antipathy to the once militant, but now, in important respects, triumphant religion of the crucified Nazarene !

XVII.

THEORY VERSUS FACT

CHRISTIANITY is emphatically, as has been so often said in the course of these lectures, a religion of facts. It certainly has, like the so-called religions of the world, a superstructure of doctrine and precept, but this superstructure, superb and glorious, is raised on a basis of well-attested facts. Or, to change the figure, it presents a drapery of speculative truths and practical principles, of dogmas of religion to be believed in and rules of morality to be reduced to practice, but this drapery, so beautiful and gorgeous, is intertwined with a series of historical facts of a stupendous character.

In plain English, Christianity presents a sublime system of theology, but its theology, which is as far above the theology of other religions as the heaven is above the earth, has for its basis a framework of historical occurrences. It presents, moreover, a beautiful and benevolent system of morality, but its morality, which in purity, symmetry, and comprehensiveness is as far removed from the crude, ill-digested systems embodied in man-invented religions as the north pole is removed from the south, derives its inspiration, its power, and vitality from its thrilling incidents and episodes.

Take away from Christianity the glorious facts from which it derives its life-blood, and its doctrine dwindles

down into a lifeless and barren creed, and its morality becomes a bleached skeleton of galling restrictions. Our religion is emphatically a religion of facts, and in its historical character it is different from all the other religions of the world. It is a matter of fact that no religion besides Christianity builds its superstructure of doctrine and precept on a basis of historical facts. It is admitted that the religions of the world, ordinarily characterised as heathen, have a great deal to do with the exploits and adventures of heroes and sages, but the mass of occurrences and incidents they bring forward is a mass of mythical and legendary tales, not of well-attested and indisputable historical facts.

Hinduism comes to us with countless throngs of gods and goddesses whom we are called upon to worship and serve, but not one of these can with any degree of justice be called an historical character, nor are the extraordinary deeds for which they are famous worthy of even a humble place in the reliable annals of the country.

Buddhism, though separable as a religion, or rather a morality, from the incidents interwoven with it, does present a mass of extraordinary occurrences, but who will stand up to authenticate these or raise them to the lofty position of established facts?

This may be said with equal amount of justice of all the other man invented systems of religion to which the homage of races, nations, and communities has been given. The occurrences they bring forward are generally speaking separable from their dogmas and precepts, though in some respects they are certainly intertwined with these, but whether separable or inseparable from what constitutes the essence of religion in each of the systems characterised as heathen, these occurrences are wild myths, originating in prehistoric times, and bearing on the surface unmistakable marks of legendary extravagance.

When they are arrayed in antagonism to Christianity you have a contrast between an incoherent, ill-digested, and puerile mass of pseudo facts, the products of a mythic age, and a connected, systematised series of well-attested and indisputable facts which occurred in an age distinguished, not merely by poetic fervour and philosophic penetration, but by historical research and critical acumen

But it may be said that Mohammedanism has a groundwork of solid facts for its foundation, and that it therefore may stand a comparison in this respect with Christianity. That we do find some fairly attested historical facts associated with the religion of Mohammed we have not the slightest hesitation in admitting. But the authenticated facts which are accidentally united to it form no part of its essence, though they may be represented as its gorgeous surroundings, or perhaps as its proofs and confirmations

Mohammedanism presents a minimum of religious truth in combination with a maximum of what may be called sumptuary enactment. Its facts and revelations have a great deal indeed to do with its paraphernalia of secular rules and regulations, but nothing, or scarcely anything, with its essence

Mohammedanism resembles theism in its essential truths, and it has, as a system of religion, no more to do with the historical facts associated with the life of its founder than the religion of the Brahmo Somaj has to do with the broad incidents of the life of Theodore Parker. It certainly differs from theism in its attitude as a revealed religion, but it is a remarkable fact that its mystical revelations have more to do with its external garment than with its internal spirit. Its revelations, moreover, are pseudo facts, and consequently, when it is placed in antagonism to Christianity, we have a contest between gross imposture

and historic veracity—between a series of artfully coined fables and a series of indisputable, though connected, facts

But the effete religions of Asia—Hinduism, Buddhism, and Mohammedanism—are not regarded by our educated countrymen as rivals of Christianity or foemen worthy of its steel. That our religion is a thousandfold better than prevalent phases of faith in Hindustan, or rather in Asia, is readily and cheerfully admitted by these gentlemen, nor have they the slightest doubt as to the certainty of their being defeated and put to confusion when placed in antagonism to Christianity.

They never dream, therefore, of attacking the Christian faith with weapons borrowed from the armoury of the old and decrepit systems of religion which prevail in India and on the continent of Asia. They are sure that the old weapons, which were skilfully handled and wielded when English education was either in the womb of time or in its cradle, will not do, and that, if their opposition to Christianity is not backed by anything better than these, it is sure to end in smoke.

Have they then abandoned themselves to despair? No, English education of the stamp communicated in Government colleges and schools has placed some new weapons, or weapons new to them, though old and rusty in lands more forward than our own, within their reach, and these they are trying to brandish with a view to frighten away the hated system against which the old weapons have been levelled in vain.

Asiatic princes, whom circumstances lead to think of measuring their strength with European nations, never have recourse to the old-fashioned and all but useless guns employed in Asiatic battlefields before European civilisation smiled upon them. They, on the contrary, import new guns from Europe, and with the help of these they think it possible to face nations whose all-conquering power has

struck terror into their hearts, and those of their coadjutors and auxiliaries

In the same manner, when our educated countrymen wish to manifest and give efficacy to their natural and avowed opposition to Christianity, they do not have recourse to the arguments which are marshalled against it by the uneducated natives, but they study English books, and master the varied forms of infidelity prevalent in Europe, and from these foreign depositories they bring what in their opinion is fitted to lead them to success

So far as educated natives are concerned, our religion has to face and overcome in India the same foes that it has to face and overcome in Europe and America. The *isms* that oppose it in those distant and favoured lands are the identical systems of faith or no faith that strive to check its progress in India, and as their opposition in Christendom has resulted in the citadel of our faith being strengthened and fortified, so their opposition in India will result in its gradual propagation and ultimate triumph

The *isms* of enlightened Christendom, to which the homage of the educated, English-speaking natives of India is unreservedly consecrated, are Atheism, Theism, Pantheism, and Positivism, and these are the exotic systems, not Hinduism and Mohammedanism, that are placed in antagonism to our holy faith. That they are exotic creeds, not reproductions of the ancient philosophical speculations of the country, will be apparent to all who take the trouble of looking into their nature, and examining narrowly the varied ingredients of which they are composed

The Atheism which is advocated by some members of the educated community is not the atheism of the Sankhya School revived and re-established, but the atheism which may be squeezed out of the philosophic speculations of Hume and the scientific theories of Tyndal and Huxley

The theism professed by a small minority among our educated countrymen is not the theism of the Logical Schools reproduced and propagated afresh, but the maudlin, unsteady, staggering, and rollicking theism which is set forth in the smart but worthless writings of heroes like Theodore Parker

The Pantheism which is now entangling in its meshes some members of the community alluded to is not the supple, inconsistent, self contradictory system set forth in the *upanishads* and *Sutras*, the writings of Vyas and Shanker Acharya, but the much more logically and philosophically constructed idealism contained in the speculations of Spinoza, Fichte, and Hegel

And the Positivism advocated is not the humanitarianism inculcated and practised by Buddha and his followers, but that of which Auguste Comte is the father and Mill and other writers are the expositors. That these transplanted, not revived, systems have a dash of orientalism is admitted, but it is to be observed that they are the *isms* of Europe brought into the country, not those of Asia disinterred and promulgated. The contest between these systems and Christianity is a contest between wild, vagrant speculations and established facts

Each of these forms of faith—or rather no faith—consists of a series of gratuitous assumptions, wild conjectures, and frightful negations, and those who oppose them to Christianity are doing nothing less than opposing a series of theories to a series of well authenticated facts—are trying, in plain English, to overcome fact by theory. We have only to look into the nature of these systems to be convinced that when they are placed in antagonism to our heaven-bestowed religion, the case in legal parlance may be represented as Theory *versus* Fact

To begin with Atheism, it consists of a number of gra-

tuitous assumptions, wild conjectures, and terrible negations. It coolly takes for granted the eternity of matter either in the shape of atoms or in the shape of nebulae or in that of star-dust or fiery mist. It takes for granted the independent existence and operation of certain laws by which alone beauty and order might be evolved out of its original chaotic condition. It takes for granted the fortuitous motion of atoms or the ceaseless revolution of masses of nebulae or star-dust. It takes for granted the absence of design, in spite of overwhelming masses of evidence to the contrary, and by means of a number of conjectures of the wildest character it ascribes to material movements operations which are mental in their nature.

And through the pathway of these cool assumptions and erratic speculations, it arrives at the frightful negations which it arrays like so many phantoms before us. There is no God! There is no law of rectitude! There is no heaven, no hell, no immortality, no future life either of rewards or punishments. There is a longing within us after the infinite, a longing, which though literally buried under a heap of base desires and irregular lusts, makes its original power and indestructibility manifest—a longing which can never find rest except in the bosom of the Almighty who is its object, but this innate and irresistible longing of our hearts is a delusion.

There is a law written in our hearts, a law which we would gladly wipe out of them, but which frustrates and confounds all our attempts to eradicate it, but this law is a mockery. There are presentiments in us in favour of the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments—presentiments of which we often try, but in vain, to get rid, but these are dreams, fruits of a superstition, from the trammels of which we ought to extricate ourselves.

The grand conclusion to which Atheism brings us is that we resemble the brutes that perish in every respect,

and that our grand business in this life is to eat, drink, and be merry. It does not stop, however, to tell us how we can cherish this gloomy and degrading view of life, and at the same time enjoy ourselves.

If everything it says is true, if God, His government, His laws, the heaven towards which He is inviting us to march forward, and the hell which He commands us to flee from, are all myths, and if all the noble longings and impulses of our moral nature are delusions, the thing we are induced to do is to abandon ourselves to wailing and lamentation, rather than to eat, drink, and be merry! But whatever may be the nature of the conclusion to which Atheism brings us, it is a matter of fact that it intrenches itself behind an array of gratuitous assumptions and dreadful negations.

Nor does Theism bring before us anything better than a series of gratuitous assumptions and frightful negations. Theism is the antipodes of Atheism, and embodies truths which are of the last importance to man. It maintains the existence of God, points to the eternal distinction between right and wrong, upholds the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments, and gives currency, though in a very limited form, to the idea of a superintending providence.

But it coolly assumes the impossibility of the supernatural, or the direct action of God in the sphere of nature, and proclaims without a shadow of proof, or rather in spite of overwhelming proofs to the contrary, the sufficiency of repentance to place man in what is technically called a salvable condition. But its cool assumptions, more numerous in the sphere of history than in that of science, are perhaps less injurious than its negations.

There is no revelation, no incarnation, no mediation, no sacrifice for sin! We naturally and instinctively long for a revelation from God, an objective revelation attested by objective proofs, but this longing, original and innate, is a

delusion We naturally and instinctively long for an incarnation to bridge the chasm between us and God, or to bring God down to the level of our comprehension, but this longing, albeit born with us, is a mockery We naturally and instinctively believe the doctrine of mediation, but this belief, though one of which we cannot divest ourselves, is a superstition

And lastly, we long for an atonement or sacrifice for sin, but this longing, developed in all the religions of the world, is a derivative instinct bred and nourished in us by unworthy views of God

Thus does theism, though avowedly based on intuition, jar against one and all the sublime instincts of our moral nature We naturally long for certainty in matters of religion, and theism tries to satisfy this longing with a number of human opinions It of course dignifies them by high-sounding appellations—calls them intuitions, moral perceptions, primitive beliefs, original truths, the teachings of conscience, and the contents of consciousness, but they are in plain English human opinions, and when they are arrayed against Christianity, you have a contest between a series of theories and a series of facts !

Pantheism, into which Theism with its cold and abstract idea of God is often sublimated, comes to us with a number of inscrutable theories and meaningless phrases, with its immanent divinity, its cyclic development, its eternal thought-process, its subject-object, its being-non-being, its universal ego, and its absolute idea, its one-all and all-one It arrays before the world these dire contradictions and paradoxes, these enigmas and riddles which even an archangel could not apprehend or explain, and bids it take heart and rejoice

But underlying its drapery of paradox there is many a cool assumption, while its negations are really as frightful as those associated with atheism, of which it is only a

decent type. It coolly assumes the existence of one essence, which pervades all things. It assumes the existence of an immanent law by which its all-pervading deity is forced to develop itself in the varied modes of thought and extension of which we are conscious and cognisant.

It assumes that personality necessarily implies limitation, and it therefore develops the idea of an impersonal God. It assumes that intelligence implies such a distinction between subject and object as necessarily leads to the limitation of the one by the other, and it therefore brings forward the idea of unintelligent essence as the source of all existence.

It assumes that volition involves us in similar difficulties, and therefore it promulgates the theory of an involuntary agent, who is neither living nor dead, and who comes to consciousness in man, and to superabundance of intelligence in its own champions.

But its negations are as frightful as the disquisitions and phrases it piles up before us are unintelligible and meaningless. There is no personal, intelligent, and voluntary Being at the head of the government of the universe. There is no such thing as an eternal and essential distinction between right and wrong. Freedom of will is a dream, sin is an impossibility, and worship is a mockery.

Let the divinity in man be abandoned to its own spontaneous action, and let all restrictive measures be thrown out, let society be unhinged, the laws of property be cast overboard, and community not only of goods but of wives also be secured by æsthetic culture, and heaven will be realised in this dark world.

Sin exists in the world with its ravages and depredations scattered broadcast, but it is an illusion. Our consciences tell of an eternal and immutable law of rectitude, but our consciences deceive us. We are conscious of the freedom

of choice we enjoy, but our consciousness misleads us. The whole world is a huge lie, and God Himself the deceiver ! Surely the nineteenth century is a century of universal advancement ! Pantheism places a series of phantoms of the most frightful order in antagonism to the established facts of Christianity

And lastly let us come to Positivism, into which theism, when not elaborated into pantheism, degenerates. Positivism is the Belial of the Pandemonium of infidelity, sleek in person, gentlemanly in appearance, winning in address, and sweet in speech. In the loudest manner conceivable, it bids us ascertain what the proper duty of science is, and never to bother ourselves about things which lie beyond its province

The province of phenomena is the legitimate province of scientific investigation, and into the varied phases, co-existences, successions, and transmutations of material phenomena you are at liberty to pry. Nay, you may, if not under the guidance of the master of the system, at least under the guidance of his noted disciples, pry into the region of unseen forces and occult laws

But here must your penetrating genius stop ! The sphere of theology you must on no account rush into. True science has nothing whatever to do with theological questions. There may or may not be a God. Worship may or may not be due to Him. An eternal and permanent law of rectitude may or may not exist. Heaven and hell may or may not have existence apart from the brains of interested priests. You may or may not have a moral nature to cultivate and improve by the appliances of a theological age

But, thanks to the genius of science as well as the sweet spirit of humanity, you have nothing whatever to do with these problems. Perform the work given you, discharge the duties prescribed to you, adorn your path with the

amenities and charities of life, and all will be right with you

The nineteenth century is the antipodes of the theological age, and all talk of religion, excepting that of humanity, must be tabooed. Positivism comes to us with a series of doubts—it points to these phantasms and bids us take heart and set our minds at rest ! It is not necessary for us to pause and prove that it is a form of atheism, and inconsistent with the truths of science properly so called, the dictates of human consciousness, and the teachings of common sense, suffice it to observe that it places its doubts in antagonism to the facts associated with our holy religion

All these forms of religion, or rather irreligion, place before us masses of theory and speculation, of contradiction and paradox, of enigma and riddle, of cool assumption and frightful negation. Christianity opposes a series of facts to their dreams and phantoms, and Christianity obtains an easy victory over them

The case is *Theory versus Fact*, and the result is theory overridden by Fact. Young men in this country do not take the trouble to look into the nature of the controversies that rage in Christendom between the paramount religion and the wild speculations which, either under the guidance of intuitionist philosophy or under that of empirical science, are rising up to dispute its authority

They do not know what Christianity is, and their knowledge of its essence derived from the writings of those who have been trying to rationalise it into a system of pure naturalism, is inaccurate to the very core. Nor are they aware of the fact that it is opposed, not by the established facts either of history or of science, not even by the moral instincts of humanity, but by a series of theories, speculations, conjectures, and surmises. They know that nothing can be more ridiculous than an attempt to overturn facts by

theories, but they are not aware that the great rationalistic and scientific opponents of Christianity are only trying this experiment

Christianity is emphatically a religion of facts, and their religions, if religions they ought to be called, are tissues of speculation let loose. And yet it is confidently expected that these forms of speculative thought will triumph over Christianity, or rather that a series of well attested facts will retire before a series of wild theories, not one of which has even a shadow of a reasoning to rest upon! The days of the exploded belief in ghosts have come back, and it is expected in the most sanguine manner that an army of strong and stalwart men will retreat in irretrievable confusion before phantoms of human creation

After all that has been said in the course of these lectures, it seems scarcely necessary for us to pause and prove that Christianity is emphatically a religion of facts. But a succinct statement of the facts of our religion will set forth the suicidal tendency of modern speculation, and be a fitting conclusion to the great argument it has been our desire, feebly and briefly, to present, and so let us now undertake to answer the question, What is Christianity?

Baur, the prince of the champions of rationalism, shows how Christianity sprang out of the current ideas of the age when it was developed. Its essence, according to this great writer, consists of its universalism, its spirituality, its moral excellence, and its ascetic tendency. But the germs of these ideas existed in the current religions and literature of the period when the Lord Jesus Christ and His disciples gave definiteness of outline and fixedness of shape to its doctrines and precepts

The doctrine of universality, an essential feature of Christianity, sprang out of the political condition of the Roman Empire, which by its territorial extent, and the

heterogeneous character of its population, had rendered the idea of universalism popular

The deep spirituality of Christianity, besides being a repulsion from the carnality of current religious consciousness, was derived from the idealism of ancient philosophy, particularly from that of Plato

Its morality was the genuine outcome of the spirit of the Jewish religion, while the asceticism with which it is tinctured was derived from the principles of the Therapeutes and the Essenes. So the characteristic ideas of Christianity were unfolded from the germs of lofty thought scattered in the religious books, the poetry, and philosophy of ancient times

The law of natural growth or development explains the origin of our holy religion, and a recourse on our part to Divine revelation and supernatural agencies, to explain what is, strictly speaking, a natural phenomenon, is absurd. Granting that these ideas were evolved from current tendencies of thought by the law of attraction and repulsion, we have yet to be assured that they constitute the essence of Christianity. Had these been the soul and substance of our holy religion, the natural explanation of the greatest champion of naturalism might have been accepted, but they are ornaments and appendages of Christianity, not its essence

Let us once more raise the question, What is the essence of Christianity? Christianity is associated with a body of devotional poetry, which in variety, pathos, and sublimity is unrivalled in the opinion of linguists like Sir William Jones, and which has been a source of æsthetic and moral culture for many a livelong age, but these effusions of poetic genius, though eminently fitted to work up our feelings into a flame of pious enthusiasm, do not constitute its essence

Christianity is associated with narratives which in sim-

phicity, fidelity, and picturesqueness are unrivalled, and which, by giving due prominence to the superintending providence of God, are fitted to warn us away from vicious courses, but the history which is accidentally connected with it, and which must be contradistinguished from what intertwines itself with it, is not its essence

Christianity is associated with prophetic utterances apart from those which enter into its texture—utterances grand, lofty, sublime, presenting visions of dire revolutions and beneficent changes, but these, albeit fitted to impart to us glorious ideas of God, cannot be represented as its essence

Christianity is associated with didactic discourses of unspeakable theoretical importance and practical value, but these even do not constitute its essence The soul of Christianity is not its beautiful, harmoniously-developed, and faultless ethical system This ethical system is as far above those which it has superseded as the heavens are above the earth, and those only who, like John Stuart Mill, are ignorant of its broad basis and benevolent character are foolish enough to rail at it.

The ascetic tendency noticed in it by Baur, and attributed by him to the supposed influence exercised over it by the principles of the Therapeutes and the Essenes, is a figment of the critic's head rather than one of its elements This is the only system of morality in the world which holds an even balance between asceticism on one side and libertinism on the other, which, while giving due prominence to the passive virtues, encourages and fosters those called active But this system of morality, so beautiful, so symmetrical, so complete, is not the essence of Christianity

What, then, is that essence? Our countrymen often speak in this strain Is there anything new in Christianity? "Is there anything in Christianity which is not to be found in the Shastras of the country? Are not its moral principles to be found scattered in these sacred books?

Why should we embrace a new religion for the purpose of securing what we have in our own?"

When they speak in this strain they display their complete ignorance of the essence of Christianity. Their statements would be correct if the morality of the New Testament constituted this essence, but as it does not, these statements cannot but be represented as irrelevant and useless.

What, then, is the essence of Christianity? The essence of Christianity is Christ and the great work of redemption. He came to accomplish, and did accomplish. Christianity is not a string of theories, a system of doctrines, or a code of morality—it is a remedy for sin concentrated in Christ. Christianity may be considered in its objective and subjective aspects, as the so called religions of the world may.

Christianity in its objective aspect is Christ in the world revealing the Father to us in His matchless character, presenting in His life a perfect model of virtue, and making by His vicarious sufferings and expiatory death an atonement for sin.

Christianity in its subjective aspect is Christ in us freeing us from the dominion of sin, adorning us with the grace of His Spirit, and preparing us for His incipient militant kingdom in this world, and the fully developed triumphant and everlasting kingdom in which it terminates. So that, whether objectively or subjectively considered, Christianity is concentrated in the person of our Lord—that is in a Fact, or rather the most glorious, the crowning Fact of history.

The Central Fact of history is Christ, who stands before us as the goal of an old economy and the starting-point of a new dispensation. Ancient history terminated and modern history commenced in Christ. The multifarious streams of events which influenced, moulded, and fashioned the ancient world, and prepared it for the innumerable

blessings that have been poured upon its lap during the last eighteen hundred years, converged towards and met in Him

And the multifarious streams of events which have been influencing, moulding, and fashioning the modern world, and preparing it for the consummation foretold in millennial prophecies, have issued from Him, and have His glorification for their object

Christ does not stand as a shadow, or even the biggest shadow of the past—nay, He stands before us as the Supreme Disposer of the events of this world, preparing it by a scheme of preliminary revelation for the accomplishment of the atonement made by Himself, and guiding it through the vivifying and regenerating influences of the truth embodied in Himself towards its goal of millennial prosperity and glory !

A stream of preliminary revelation, beginning with the fall of man, and gradually broadening and expanding as the circling ages rolled on, prepared the world for His advent and work. Our educated countrymen represent Christianity as a *modern* religion, as a religion which is only eighteen hundred years old, and as a *parvenu* in comparison with the national faith of Hindustan

, When, however, they speak in this strain they ignore or forget two important facts. They forget that the present phase of Hinduism, which is essentially different from ancient Hinduism, is not even as old as Christianity is represented by them to be, and that therefore their laboured and imposing eulogy of its antiquity is decidedly misplaced. They forget, moreover, that our religion began its work of enlightenment and regeneration when sin entered the world, and unutterable misery resulted as its dire consequence.

Christianity appeared when man sinned, and therefore our religion is as old as sin. We have not the slightest hesitation in affirming that our religion did not exist before

the fall of man, and that if sin had not appeared to blight the fair fields of Eden innocence and Eden happiness it would not have been a necessity. But sin did appear, and the original religion of man, call it by whatever name you please, Theism, Naturalism, the religion of conscience or the Gospel of the heart, was not fitted and consequently failed to eradicate it, and a new remedial system was peremptorily demanded by the altered circumstances of the world.

A new remedial system did we say? Let us rather affirm, that a mighty Saviour was needed to save the world from sin and its dire consequences. To that Saviour the eyes of the fallen pair, Adam and Eve, were directed, even when the solemn sentence of punishment was being pronounced in their hearing. When the Almighty cursed the tempter and cursed the ground for the sake of sinful man, He sowed the seed of Christianity in this memorable promise—"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed, it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

This seed was Christianity in a germinal form—this promise was the promise of deliverance wrought by the Lord Jesus Christ. This was the first finger-post elevated towards the advent and glorious career of our blessed Lord, and the first emblem of the Great Sacrifice for sin completed in His death appeared, in consequence evidently of Divine direction, in the animal offered by the pious Abel.

The promise and the institution of sacrifice descended as heirlooms to the patriarchs of the antediluvian world, and those of them who availed themselves of the deliverance prophesied in the one and typified in the other were saved, even though their worship was carnal, and their minds incapable of looking through the dark future into the glorious work of which their salvation was a retrospective effect.

This glorious promise, the first link of a chain of super-

natural revelation which terminated in Christ Jesus, was repeated to Abraham, who was separated from a heathen home and an idolatrous people to be, in himself and in his posterity, the depository of the knowledge of God in a dark, God-ignoring, and God-denying world. It was renewed in various forms, and with varied features of particularity superadded, till its vagueness disappeared in a glorious distinctness of outline and definiteness of shape.

Originally pertaining to a race, it was gradually limited at first to a nation, the descendants of Jacob, then to a tribe, the progeny of Judah, and ultimately to a house, the house of David. It developed into a series of prophecies, extending over ages and generations, gradually becoming more and more expansive and luminous, till almost all the events of the life of our Lord, both great and small, might be seen foreshadowed in them.

The time of His advent, the place of His birth, the reverses attending His childhood, the preparation for His public appearance in the mighty preaching of the ascetic forerunner, the nature of His teaching and works, His vicarious suffering, His agony in the garden and upon the Cross, His death, crucifixion, and burial, resurrection and ascension, His Pentecostal effusion of the Spirit, and His perennial work of dominion and guidance, are all referred to in the preparatory revelation with particularity and fulness.

Nay, we have, running through the Scriptures, a portrait of Christ which in every respect—in general outline as well as in the minutest details—corresponds with that drawn in the Gospels.

Nor were the prophecies into which the original promise given to Adam and Eve after their fall developed the only revelations of Christ vouchsafed to the ancient world. The simple, though bloody, sacrifice presented to God by the righteous Abel developed, in course of time, and under the guidance of revelation, into a gorgeous, impressive, and

affecting ritual, every item of which was a finger-post elevated towards the glorious redemptive work accomplished by our God

The temple service, with its veil unrent, concealing the *shekinah* from the public gaze, its altar drenched with sacrificial blood, its offerings and oblations, its rites and ceremonies, its fasts and festivals, its private rejoicings and public jubilees, typified the work of Christ and its glorious consequences as graphically as the afore-mentioned prophecies foretold them. The sin-offerings, specially those presented on various occasions as well as those presented on the day of atonement, are utterly meaningless unless they are represented as symbols or types of the sacrificial death of our Lord on the heights of Calvary

The Jewish economy, with its gorgeous ritual, or through the instrumentality of its solemn services and affecting ceremonies, kept certain important ideas alive amongst the ancient people of God. The first idea kept alive through these symbolic observances, or rather through the spirit and letter of the whole economy, was the stern and inflexible justice of God. God was merciful to them as a people, and the entire dispensation of the blessings of which they were the favoured recipients was a sensible and tangible demonstration of His love to them. But this very love demanded that they should be thoroughly acquainted with His justice before they became partakers of His mercy, or that their salvation should be wrought out in a manner consistent with His holiness

The second idea kept alive amongst them was the intense malignity of sin. They were not to be familiarised with the idea of pardon till they had been-made aware of the darkness of sin, and of their duty to hate, detest, and abhor it. The idea of the necessity of an atonement for sin was kept alive amongst them through the sin-offerings presented and the innumerable victims sacrificed. The sacrifice made

by God for the atonement needed, and His acceptance of it, they were taught to look upon as the highest exhibition of love Divine

These are the ideas which we find upheld and presented in their maturest forms in the Life and Death of our Lord. The revelation of the Old Testament, therefore, was from beginning to end nothing more or less than a revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is the Central Fact of history in general—Christ is the Central Fact of Jewish history and the Revelation associated with it.

We of course do not maintain that the ancient Jews saw the prophetic portrait of Christ presented in their Scriptures as clearly as we do, or that we could have seen it in all its entirety without the original before us. The Old Testament conception of the Messiah appears at first sight different from that presented in the New Testament, inasmuch as it appears in conjunction with, or rather clothed in, ideas of military triumph and regal splendour.

The humiliation of Christ does appear to us in the Old Testament, as it does in the New, but it appears concealed beneath His exalted character as king destined to sit on the throne of David and reign for ever and ever. The crown of thorns is scarcely visible in the Old Testament portraits beneath the crown of regal glory—the garment of humiliation is scarcely seen beneath the robes of royalty. Hence the Jews fell most naturally into the mistake of cherishing carnal ideas about the Messiah, so much so that the appearance of a poor and suffering Messiah amongst them led not merely to His being almost universally rejected by them, but to that crowning act of human impiety, His crucifixion amid the reproaches and bitter sarcasms of an infuriated populace.

We are willing to admit that the Old Testament conception of the Messianic character is so obviously steeped in

the splendour of royalty that if Christ had been an impostor He would not have appeared as He did, or that if the disciples had only thought of bringing forward a person fitted to personate that character, they would not have made Christ appear as He did. But when, with the original before us, we search the Scriptures, we find a portrait of Christ resembling it in what may be called its wholesale grandeur, as well as in many of its minutest details.

In this respect the New Testament bears the same relation to the Old Testament which the book of revelation bears in many respects to the book of nature. There are precious truths of religion and morality concealed in the book of nature, but these we cannot discover except when we interpret it with the help of the flood of light thrown upon it by revelation.

So there is a complete picture of Christ presented in the Old Testament, but we cannot discover it in all its entirety without the help of the flood of light cast upon its pages by the New Testament. But having the two pictures spread out before us, we are warranted in saying that Christ is the subject of the Old Testament as well as of the New Testament revelation.

In fulness of time the Lord Jesus Christ, whose life and work had been foreshadowed and prefigured in a series of symbolic observances, types, and prophecies, appeared, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them who are under the curse of the law. Varieties of objects were subserved by His advent and career.

He came to place the fundamental truths of religion on a firm, permanent, and solid basis, inasmuch as those who have seen the Divine glory mellowed and softened so far as to prevent our being overpowered and dazzled, bursting forth in His life and character, cannot possibly doubt the existence and goodness of God. He came to bring God down to the level of our comprehension—to present Him

in a form in which alone, with our limited and depraved faculties, we can know, love, and serve Him

He came to show, in the beautiful words of a brilliant lecturer, the heart of God towards the sinner, who, in proportion as he contemplates the humility and self-sacrifice of God in Him for his sake, cannot possibly doubt His willingness to save him from the punishment and power of sin

He came to gather the best teachings of the past, with His own additions and comments, into a code of morality which even His enemies have been compelled to hold up as one of the moral wonders of the world, and which John Stuart Mill could not attack without betraying a superficiality unworthy not merely of a philosopher, but even of an ordinary thinker. He came not merely to present in His teachings a perfect code of morality, but to set forth in His life a perfect model of character, insomuch that we cannot gaze upon it without being magnetised into a life of sublime virtue and glorious self sacrifice. But He came to do something more—He came to make an atonement for sin

The antiquity and universality of the doctrine of sacrifice, combined with the obvious impossibility of our tracing it to human invention, prove its Divine origin, and streams of sacrificial blood shed in the various countries of the heathen world, as well as in Palestine, had pointed to the great work of redemption. Christ came specially to accomplish

Christ led a life of sorrow and distress proceeding as well from systematic persecution as from the prevalence of sin and suffering in the world, and He ultimately gave up His life amid the agonies of a cruel martyrdom for man. By His life of intense sorrow and His death of unparalleled suffering He became the offerer as well as the victim of that great sacrifice for sin, which all the bloody sacrifices in Jewry as well as in heathen lands had foreshadowed and prefigured. His sufferings were vicarious, and His death completed the work of human redemption by removing the

obstacle which stood as a huge mountain between God and man

Sin interrupted and stopped all free intercourse between God and man—made it impossible for God to extend His mercy towards man, and for man to apply for and receive help from God. Sin, in other words, made it impossible for God to approach man with assurances of His love, and for man to approach God with assurances of his penitence and sorrow, and this obstacle was washed away by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

All the reasons which rendered the atonement offered by Christ a necessity it is absolutely impossible for us to set forth. Our reason and experience tell us that God as our sovereign could not pardon sin by a simple act of prerogative without compromising His dignity, dishonouring His law, and endangering the interests of His kingdom, and we might, by dwelling upon human usages, point out a few of the lofty principles of jurisprudence which might have co-operated or been upheld in the sacrifice of Christ.

But all the reasons which met, as it were, in the atonement made by Christ, or all the objects subserved by His suffering and death, it is by no means within our power to state and elucidate. Nor, happily, are we required to do so. If we simply point out the fact of the atonement, and prove it by evidence such as we cannot set aside, and at the same time claim the privilege of being considered sane, we have done all that we can be properly called upon to do.

The fact of the atonement it is our bounden duty to enlarge upon and demonstrate. But the *rationale* of the atonement it is no part of our business to disclose. It is easy enough to show that Christ died for sin not His own, and that in His death the justice of God is upheld while His mercy is extended to a lost world—His abhorrence of sin is exhibited, while the sinner is drawn by the cords of His

infinite love towards a life of faith and trust and complete self-surrender

The objections usually advanced against the Scripture doctrine, or rather the fact of the atonement, are of the most futile character, and proceed as a rule from a gross misapprehension of its character and results. We cannot pause here to state them one after another, and expose their irrelevancy, weakness, or utter groundlessness. But we cannot help taking notice of certain misrepresentations which our Brahmo friends are moving heaven and earth to promulgate.

These gentlemen derive their notions of Christianity, not from the Bible, of which they are as ignorant as the little boy who has just learned to spell the word *gravitation* is ignorant of the contents of Newton's *Principia*, not even from standard works on Christian theology, but from the inaccurate, one-sided, and mendacious pamphlets issued by infidel writers in Europe and America. Their views of Christianity and the sublime doctrines associated with it are especially borrowed from those works of Theodore Parker which are marvels of audacity and mendacity, and it is no wonder that under the guidance of such a man they circulate misrepresentations of the grossest order.

The atonement in their opinion represents God as a vindictive being, a ferocious tyrant, a monster of cruelty, a bloodthirsty Moloch who exacts to the uttermost farthing and gloats over the suffering of His own Son. If they, however, take the trouble of examining the Bible representation of the work of Christ, and do not allow themselves to be misled and befooled by a few well-known devotees of the father of lies, their sentiments are sure to undergo a violent revolution.

Let them only look at what the Bible represents God as having done for man from the very moment of his fall. Adam and Eve disobeyed God, set up the standard of

rebellion against His authority, and hurled defiance at His throne. How did God treat them? He came down into the world, and we cannot be accused of extravagance if we affirm that the angels of heaven looked down with intense interest, and expected to see their rebellion wiped out by its merited punishment, their death temporal and eternal.

The Judge solemnly pronounced sentences of punishment against the guilty parties, but overhanging the clouds and darkness which necessarily surrounded His Person there shone the rainbow of mercy. A glorious promise was given such as properly availed of might lead rebellious man back to the path of loyalty and peace and joy. This promise, the guiding star of a dark age, was neglected, wickedness and insolence filled the earth, and such knowledge of God as might lead to repentance and faith was swept away from it. What did God do? He punished sin indeed as at first, but repeated the promise in a modified form, and so kept open the path through which rebellious man was to return to his Maker.

This second promise was frustrated, and thick spiritual darkness overspread the world, but God chose a person, a family, a tribe, and a nation to perpetuate His knowledge amongst them, and to renew His promises till they became nearly as clear as the facts to which they referred.

This people, the nation of religion, as the Greeks were the nation of culture, followed the evil example set by surrounding nationalities, and revolted, but God, instead of destroying them and so extinguishing for ever the hope of the world, sent messenger after messenger to command, invite, and even entreat them to return to the path of duty and happiness from which they had strayed. But they ill-treated these messengers, and even killed some of them.

But did God even then destroy them? No, other batches of messengers were sent, but these were treated in the same defiant, wicked, and cruel manner. But even

this did not exhaust the Divine patience and love, for, behold the greatest marvel of love! in fulness of time God sent His only-begotten and well-beloved Son to save man by giving up His life as a ransom for sin

And the Being who has done all this, who has so patiently borne with man and purchased his salvation at such a tremendous cost, who has passed through this inconceivable process of self-sacrifice for us, is the Person who is represented by Brahmos, ignorant of the very A B C of our theology, as a cruel tyrant, a monster of ferocity, a bloodthirsty Moloch!

Are they not distorting Biblical statements, misrepresenting Biblical facts and truths, and promulgating lies with unblushing impudence? Are they not imitating the style of Parker's denunciation to the very letter, stultifying themselves in the opinion of sensible men, and making a shipwreck of their assumed character as honest men and candid inquirers?

While religions like Hinduism come to you with wild myths and wild fables, while Pantheism old and new comes to you with meaningless phrases and incomprehensible disquisitions, while positivism comes to you with a series of ghostly doubts and terrible negations, while theism comes to you with a number of human opinions dignified into intuitions, Christianity comes to you with a number of miraculous facts

The Lord Jesus Christ is a fact, the Central Crowning Fact of the history of the world! The series of revelations, which were ushered in amid miraculous surroundings and which culminated in Him, are Facts! The miracles of wisdom and power associated with the life of Christ are facts! The stupendous character of Christ, than which a greater miracle cannot be conceived, is a Fact! The miraculous change wrought in the characters of the first teachers of Christianity on the day of the Pentecost, the

glorious change which cannot be possibly explained except by supposing a special outpouring of the Spirit of God, is a Fact! The early propagation of Christianity, secured amid circumstances of overwhelming difficulty, and therefore fitted to show forth the power of God as well as to establish the truth of the miraculous facts associated with it, is a Fact! The moral revolution accomplished by Christianity is a Fact!

What a glorious range of miracles before you! You can look at them through the eye of what may be called your historic consciousness, or rather historic faith, and you may by a little study and research attain with reference to them a certainty similar to what you have attained with reference to the facts which have occurred within your lifetime and under your eyes. Nor are miracles which you can see now with your bodily and mental eyes wanting.

The Church is itself a miracle, and a standing evidence of the Divinity of our Lord! Had Christ been a man, His religion would have naturally and certainly perished when He died upon the Cross. He was a poor man, the reputed son of a carpenter, without scholastic education, power, or influence, and His followers were a set of persons who were like Him poor, illiterate, powerless, and forlorn. He was arrested in the midst of His career, condemned, and crucified, and His trembling followers were dispersed.

His religion was apparently buried in the grave which closed over His mangled corpse. But it rose with Him, and through the instrumentality of the weak things of the world, and things that were nought, it brought to nought the things that were. And to-day it is the reigning religion of the world, the triumphant faith of its mightiest nations, the all-conquering faith before which the varied systems of the earth, its hoary heathenisms as well as new-fangled creeds, are retreating in wild disorder.

Its past history has been a history of triumph and glory,

and its present career is a career of triumph and glory Its present ascendancy is a standing proof of the Divinity of its Founder !

Again, look at its triumphs within the sanctuary of the human spirit The greatest miracle that can be wrought in this world even by power Divine is the regeneration of the human soul To bring order out of the mass of disorder within us, beauty out of ashes, gladness out of sorrow, to make the soul dead in trespasses and sins instinct with the life of God, to make man sin-deformed and sin-defiled God-like in his dispositions and desires—this needs the forth-putting of creative power higher than was displayed when the Almighty brought forms of imitable beauty out of a vast, surging, chaotic mass of matter And this stupendous miracle Christianity or the living Christ is working every day in your presence

Attend one of the revival meetings so frequently held in various parts of the country, and you will see moral miracles wrought before which the miracles properly so called worked by Christ Himself in the days of His humiliation on earth dwindle into insignificance, you will see the drunkard made sober in the twinkling of an eye by power Divine, the profligate converted into a man of chaste thoughts and sublime principles, the man of a violent disposition becoming gentle as a little child and meek as a lamb, the mind darkened by sin irradiated by light Divine, the seared conscience rendered soft as melted wax, the corrupt heart changed into a temple of God, and agitated feelings giving place to holy tranquillity and serene joy ! What greater miracles do you need to convince you of the truth of Christianity and the Divinity of its Founder ?

